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# A WOMAN'S T

J Nobel

BY

L A D Y H A

"The lovers that diabel  
False rumours shall  
And evil-speaking shu

IN THREE VOL

VOL. I.



LONDON

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHER

1872.

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flowing onward, as though absorbed in some engrossing object, quite regardless of those they met, or those who elbowed them in passing. Cabs and omnibuses dashed along, while carts and waggons crawled in sluggish paces, occasionally coming to a deadlock, blocking up the way, and then struggling onward at the slash of the carter's whip. Those who trusted to their own legs, got quickest to their journey's end.

If any one could have walked leisurely along among the crowded mass, and scrutinized each face, he would have caught a glimpse of every passion that can be painted on the human countenance. Some bore the stamp of money impressed upon their faces, as plainly as her gracious majesty is impressed on every coin of the realm: it was visible in their dress, in their walk, in every turn and motion; they seemed surrounded by a golden atmosphere and inhaled it with

every breath they drew. Others looked bright and hopeful, as though pleasant thoughts were buzzing about their brains, whispering what they might do, if things turned out well ; others again, of less sanguine nature, seem harassed with doubts and fears, hardly daring to hope, lest their hopes should fail—and failure is bitter to the taste ; but many there were who wore a look of hopeless drudgery, as though all the ambitious, restless passions of their nature had been long laid at rest, and their energies absorbed by monotonous toil for their daily bread. At certain hours and at certain places they might always be seen, from one end of the year to the other, threadbare and poor—plodding wearily along, as they had plodded on from their youth upwards, until they had grown old and grey-headed ; their failing footsteps slowly leading them from the living

thoroughfares to nameless graves. No matter how they may be hustled aside by the eager crowds that are starting in the race for wealth, they toil on—heeding nothing, hoping nothing.

Day by day how many enter the battle-field of Mammon, armed with strong hopes, warm impulses, and honest ambition; the music of their own hearts beating in their brains, as they think of the golden victory to come! They march boldly up to the face of fortune, as if they would stretch out their hands and grasp her; but they are hurled back with slaughtered hopes, crippled energies, perhaps wounded honour, and they wend their way homeward hand-in-hand with ruin, and thenceforth they slink through the byways of life, and their gay friends know them no more.

Among the many whose faces wore the most sanguine, hopeful expression, was a

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tall, aristocratic-looking man, with a slight stoop from the shoulder. He was not old, though his hair was iron-grey, and his face bore an expression of anxious thought, as though care and a certain unquiet spirit had graven more lines upon it than his mere life of years could have done. But looking at him at that moment, as he threaded his way through Cheapside, people, in a mere cursory glance, would have seen nothing of that restlessness that dwelt in his soul; they would only have noticed the beaming expression that shone over his features, danced in his eyes, and smiled on the softly-bearded lip. He was glad to find himself in the crowded streets again; he had been on the Continent for the last six weeks, and knew nothing of what had been going on in London during that time; but he seemed to be enjoying a mental feast of the daintiest hopes that ever fed a human

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soul. He passed the Mansion-house, and crossed by the Royal Exchange into Thread-needle-street, walking rapidly, as though his feet kept time to the music of his thoughts. In less than five minutes he had left the streaming mass of life behind him, and turned into a comparatively quiet street; he crossed direct to an old-fashioned red brick house, whose windows were curtained with cobwebs, and which altogether had a deserted appearance. Upon the door, which was splashed with mud, there was affixed a placard; the word "Closed" was written upon it. Mr. Maitland—that was the gentleman's name—stared at the placard. He could not fully comprehend its meaning. Had he mistaken the house? No; with some trepidation he ascended the steps and rang the bell violently. In a few minutes—an age it seemed to him—the door was opened by one of those ghoulisn-looking



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women who seem to haunt uninhabited mansions, and revel in the deserted warehouses and chambers of the city when the day's work is over and the busy world of men have gone home to rest.

Mr. Maitland briefly asked, "Is Mr. Soames here?" As he made the inquiry his heart sank, as though he felt it would be useless.

"Happen yer can't read," replied the woman, testily. "If Mr. Soames was here, we shouldn't be shut up. Don't you see what's wrote up there?" She pointed to the word "Closed" which was written on the placard. Mr. Maitland unconsciously followed out the Scriptural text—"A soft answer turneth away wrath," as he answered—

"I beg your pardon; but I want especially to see Mr. Soames. When do you expect him here?"

“Don’t expect him here at all,” she answered. “The last time I see him was a fortnight ago, when he gave me the keys of the office, and I asked him what I should say if anybody called. He said, ‘Tell ’em I’ve gone to the devil.’ If he kep’ his word, sir,” she added, grimly, “I don’t suppose he’ll get leave to come back. There’s no return journeys from them parts.”

Mr. Maitland grew sick at heart, and, leaning against the wall for support, stared blankly in the woman’s face. The light faded from his eyes, and a look of such helpless, hopeless despair crept into them, that her heart was touched with a sudden sympathetic pity, and there was a softening of human nature in her tone, as she added—

“Lord sakes, sir, don’t take on like that—step in, and sit down a bit. I thought everybody knowed by this time that the

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affair had busted, and all the company blown into nowheres."

"I—I know nothing," he answered, or rather gasped, looking at her with eyes that seemed to gaze, not on her, but on the ruin which stared with invisible eyes back again. She fetched him a chair. "Thank you," he added, "I'd rather stand; but if you would do me a kindness, tell me everything you know. I shall be glad of any scrap of information," he added, hoarsely.

The "all" was soon told, the scraps of information speedily gathered together; the dread which had seized him when he first read the word "Closed" upon the door was made certainty. He stood there a ruined man. There was no hope to cling to—not one, even as slight as the fabulous straw, which a drowning man could clutch at. He had ventured his all—blindly, madly perhaps—and all was lost. He knew full

well that human birds of prey have no mercy on their victims. They will wring the last coin from the hands of foolish women—even the widow's mite is not sacred to them—and tickle the ears of sanguine men by cozening tales and lying promises, until they yield up the hard-earned savings of their lives, the sole provision for their days to come. The reckless speculator gathers and seizes whatever comes in his way, and stakes all upon a chance; at one fell swoop all is lost—he himself had nothing to lose—and his dupes are left to linger through a poverty-stricken old age, unless, indeed, they die of a broken heart. Just such a dupe was Mr. Maitland now. Being what is commonly called of a speculative turn, he was easily beguiled into reckless schemes and hazardous enterprises, which were sometimes successful—though the success of one

day was often marred by the failure of the next; what he won with one hand he lost with the other. But it was all over now; the worst had come. He had over-trusted, and was betrayed. He turned from the door, and threaded his way back through the crowded streets, looking like an aged and broken man: the last hour had done the work of years. He wandered aimlessly about through the whole of that November day; he did not know, he never could remember whither. Towards dusk he might have been seen wandering along the banks of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, muttering to himself, over and over again—

“Home to Philippa—I *must* go home to Philippa!” His low muttering and his strange demeanour attracted the attention of the passers-by; they looked suspiciously at him, and even watched him for a time: but there was no need—he meditated no

evil. Presently he drifted away from the Park, and wandered beneath the gas-lights, till he found himself before his own home—a lonely house in the loneliest part of Knightsbridge. The door was opened before he had time to ring the bell; it had scarcely closed upon him, when a pair of loving arms were thrown round his neck, and that very Philippa who had so occupied his thoughts drew him into the cosy, well-lighted parlour. Between a shower of kisses and hugs, she found time to scold him tenderly, releasing him from his over-coat the while.

“Why, what a naughty papa it is to stay out till this time of night, in defiance of his anxious daughter’s sovereign commands! Why, your hair is quite wet, sir. Well, if your old enemy don’t pay a visit to your bronchial tubes this winter, it wont be for want of an invitation.” Finding he did not

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reply to her in his usual way, Philippa glanced up in his face; the light streamed full upon it, and she saw how wan and haggard he looked: her tone changed—an expression of alarm crept into her eyes.

“Are you ill, papa?” she said, anxiously; “but I need not ask, I can see you are.”

“No,” he answered, with trembling lips, “I am not ill, Philippa; but—but something has happened to distress me.”

“What is it, dear papa? do tell me what it is.”

“I cannot,” he answered, almost with a groan. “My child, don’t look at me with your mother’s eyes; God help me, I have ruined us both!” He threw himself into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed outright. The announcement, made with so much emotion, startled Philippa strangely, but she saw his mind was distressed and his body enfeebled: instead of

leading him to speak, she urged him to be silent.

“No more to-night, papa,” she whispered, soothingly; “don’t talk of any vexing things to-night.” She put her arms round him and drew his grey head towards her, until it lay pillowed on her breast; then she stooped over him, parted the thin locks from his forehead, and kissed him tenderly.

“I could not come home,” he moaned piteously, “I have been wandering about all day. I could not bear to see your face and tell you we are beggars, but it is true.”

Philippa’s heart echoed the words, “Wandering about all day!” She saw at once that he was weak from exhaustion, as well as unstrung with grief; and without another word, hurried away and brought him bread and wine.



"I cannot eat," he murmured, "I feel as if the least morsel would choke me."

"That is exactly because you have waited for it too long," she answered, cheerfully, as she dipped the bread in the wine and fed him as daintily and caressingly as though he were a child. Philippa, however, was by no means deficient in that womanly attribute, curiosity, but she knew that when the mind is torn and distracted it is not the time to wring a tale of sorrow from the lips. She was full of soft womanly ways, and tried to wean him, temporarily at least, from his depressing thoughts. Though she busied herself in making him comfortable, yet her heart was aching to know what he meant by that heart-sickening word "ruin." She made the fire blaze its brightest, thinking its ruddy glow might cheer his heart and dry up the damp upon his spirits. She

wheeled his chair to the fire-side, smoothed the little pillow she herself had worked in happier hours to support his head, and placed a footstool beneath his feet. He was obedient like a child, doing all she wished without resistance, though with seeming vacancy. The great object was to make him sleep, and "steep his sorrow in forgetfulness." Her heart grew lighter as she saw drowsiness creeping over him, and she mentally prayed it would weigh his eyelids down, and obliterate for a time the great grief that filled his soul.

It was Philippa's custom, whenever her father came home worried with the day's business, to play some soothing melody to him, either in the dim twilight or by the dreamy fire-glow, always selecting one of his favourite airs, and extemporizing on it, with all the finish and grace of an ac-

complished musician. So soon as she saw that sleep was wooing him into her fairy regions, she opened her piano and allowed her fingers to wander over the keys, seeming barely to touch them, yet producing most exquisite snatches of melody linked together like a string of pearls, and pouring out her soul in a melodious prayer which seemed to ascend to heaven. She played on until she grew so affected by the sounds she was herself creating, that tears rained down her cheeks. She could have sobbed outright, but she checked herself, and rising softly from her seat, stole across the room to see whether the music had produced what she so earnestly desired.

“Thank God! he sleeps,” she murmured under her breath; then creeping away to the far end of the room, she sat down to



## CHAPTER II.

### NEVER SAY DIE.

**A** GRAND type of female loveliness was Philippa Maitland; she was intellectually as well as physically beautiful. I wonder if any one will ever paint her portrait as I see her now? She was slightly above the middle height, some might have called her tall; she had a slender figure, with delicately-moulded hands and feet, and her head was set with classic grace upon fair sloping shoulders. A beautiful face and symmetrical figure are not always combined in one person; but Philippa possessed both in an eminent degree. If her figure attracted atten-

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tion, her face riveted it. She had a clear complexion, delicately-curved nostrils, which when she was excited showed her spirit, like those of a well-bred race-horse, and her mouth was a veritable Cupid's bow; her hair was of the darkest shade of brown, and she wore it wound in coils round her well-shaped head. Her eyes, large grey liquid eyes, with long silken lashes, were such as you seldom see in a purely English face; but then Philippa was not purely English: her mother, who had died years back, was a Spanish lady of high degree.

Beautiful as Philippa Maitland really was, there was a certain inexpressible something dawning in her face, greater than beauty's self, which considerably increased her charm; intellect and genius were visibly impressed on every feature, and gave a glory to her face such as a human

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soul alone can give to the human countenance. An observant eye looking on Philippa would have seen that she had in her the making of a noble woman; whether circumstances would combine to mar the making time alone could tell. At present, she knew little of the world or the world's ways, having lived hitherto a life of perfect quiet, if not of perfect bliss. Her father had always been trying to "make money" for her sake, he said, and she believed in him: as, perhaps, he believed in himself. He had no time to think of the delicate requirements of a girl's life. Father and daughter lived alone; there was no governess, no lady companion to keep the house in order. Philippa had rebelled against both. She would not submit to the rule of a governess, whom she regarded in the light of a step-mother in embryo—she would be ruled in her own fashion, or not

at all—and she hated the whole race of lady companions with all her heart. Perhaps because she had never come across the best specimens of either. Since she had been fifteen years old she had held supreme sway in her father's household, and had grown up quietly content and happy in her small dominion. During those quiet days which were soon to be ended, her soul was gathering knowledge and growing strong. She worked hard at her studies, for Mr. Maitland engaged for her the best masters that could be procured for money. The only fluctuation which had stirred the course of Philippa's life was the fluctuation of the "Money Market." She knew when those affairs were not satisfactory, because at such times there was always a heavy cloud upon her father's spirit. So she had grown up through her nineteen years, beautiful and brave, full of

untried energies which had never borne the brunt of the world's battle; but she was quite ready to face it when the time should come. It was approaching her now, and by the sinking at her heart she knew that it was coming.

The word "ruin," as it fell from her father's lips, struck upon her brain like a blow; she felt it, but she could not realize its full force. When the time came for retiring to rest Mr. Maitland went to his bed like a tired child. More than once during the night Philippa crept to his door, nay, to his bedside, and looked upon his face. She felt a fervent thanksgiving at her heart when she saw that he was sleeping calmly; but she kept wakeful and watchful, in a perfect fever of wonderment, till the morning dawned; then she fell into a profound sleep. When she awoke she found that the dreary night had given place to a bright



day, at least as bright a day as November ever permits us to see in London.

“I am sure it must be late!” she exclaimed, as she sprang out of bed; and on looking at her watch found she had slept more than an hour beyond her usual time. She rang the bell impatiently, to inquire why this had been allowed to be, and then learned that her father had risen early and desired that she should not be called. He had taken a cup of coffee and gone out. She inquired if he had left any message.

“No, none at all.”

“Not even to say what time he would be back?”

“No.”

Philippa was greatly disturbed. She knew nothing of his city ways or business haunts, or she would have gone herself in search of him.

“Is there anything wrong, Miss Philippa?”

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inquired Ann, who was one of those rare specimens of domestic human architecture who identify themselves with those they serve, and to a certain extent share in the weal or woe of the household.

“No, there is nothing wrong exactly,” answered Philippa; then, correcting herself, she added, “at least not that I am aware of; but papa is not well, and I am sorry he went out alone, that is all.”

Although she spoke coolly, Philippa was in a perfect agony of anxiety; uncertainty and fear—those mental tortures—played upon her heartstrings, and ran the gamut of unknown discordant terrors. Whither had he gone, and why? and without a word to her whom he called his second self! It was unkind, it was cruel, to leave her in this state of ignorance and suspense. Suppose he was to fall in a fit or die in the public streets, what should she do? what

could she do? She walked up and down the room, wringing her hands helplessly. Again and again she walked to the window, and looked out on the clear cold November day, pressing her face against the pane of glass, and staring out into the empty streets, as though her eyes could pierce through the bricks and mortar which intervened between her sight and the great high road where the stream of life was flowing all day long. Then she strained her ears to listen. She heard the rumbling of cart, carriage, and omnibus wheels, together with the clatter of people passing to and fro; she fancied she should be able to detect her father's slow faltering step among the tread of so many hurrying feet. Eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock came, but brought no father home.

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,”  
and, *strange* as it may seem, as time passed

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on she tried to reason herself into what she called "a more sensible state of mind:" she talked to herself mentally, as though she were somebody else. "Now look here, foolish Philippa," she argued, "suppose, after all, you are fretting and fuming needlessly. Things may have gone wrong with the dear papa yesterday, and during the night he has had time to think them over; perhaps he has found he was frightened with false fire—things are rarely so bad as they seem—and he has gone out this morning to set things right, and gather some good news to bring home to his child."

In this fashion she tried to comfort herself, and she fancied she was cheered and comforted; yet her heart fluttered in her breast, and she started at every footfall that approached the house. Presently her eye caught sight of the thin, slight figure of a man crossing from the opposite side of

the street. She knew who it was, knew him well. It was his usual hour for coming, but she had forgotten to expect him. There was a low, timorous knock at the door, and a moment after Signor Marini, her singing-master, was announced.

She received his somewhat ceremonious greeting in an easy, graceful way that came naturally to her, and which had in it such a nameless charm.

"You are always one of my most welcome visitors, signor," she said, giving him her hand, with a faint attempt to smile. "I never thought I should be sorry to see your face; but now indeed I am."

"Sorry!" repeated Signor Marini, with a quick inquisitorial glance upon her face, which passed in a second; and with a polite bow, he added, "Ah, signorina! Your sorrow goes so well with you, that I shall never like to see you glad again."

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“That is a doubtful compliment,” replied Philippa; “but indeed my head aches sadly, and I——”

“Ah! I have no surprise for that,” he answered, interrupting her. “I wonder you islanders do not all die of your winter—one day all fog, ugh! another all cold—ah! so cold; another all wet, and—oh! I am cough, cough all over till summer comes. Ah, well! the signora does look pale; but she will sing the roses back into her cheeks, as she sings the pride and the joy into her old master’s heart.” He approached and opened the piano as he spoke.

“That is exactly what I cannot do, dear signor,” said Philippa. “I may as well tell you the truth at once; I am in reality more sick in mind than in body. Being in great anxiety about my dear father, I have neither heart nor voice for singing. You

must excuse me, please; I cannot take my lesson to-day."

The old man's face fell; but he bowed resignedly, and said—

"No doubt the signora knew best; but for his part, whenever he was in trouble, he always flew to music for consolation, and it always soothed him, even now that he was an old man, as a mother's lullaby soothes the baby at her breast."

"Ah! but to listen to music and to make it is quite a different thing," replied Philippa. "You hear, that while I speak I can scarcely control my voice. How could I sing?"

Signor Marini's eye gleamed eagerly—

"Ah! if the signora would only try."

As Philippa glanced on the old man's threadbare clothes and wan, anxious face, she fancied that perhaps her refusal to sing might be a serious inconvenience to him.

She only paid him for the lessons she received, and the loss of half-a-guinea to a struggling man might mean more than the wealthy dream of: it might mean bread for hungry mouths at home. Philippa thought of this.

“Stay ; don’t go,” she said, as he turned from the piano with a disconsolate, lingering look. “I will try what I can do; but if I break down, you must promise not to scold me. What shall I sing?”

His face brightened as she spoke, and his mute look thanked her more than words could have done., He turned over her music, and at last selected “Non piu de’ Fiori,” which is perhaps one of the most passionately pathetic songs Mozart ever wrote. He sat down at the piano, ran his fingers lightly over the keys, and then commenced the accompaniment. Philippa began to sing. Her voice was a rich con-



tralto, full and melodious, with some touching notes of a rare, peculiar quality, that searched into the soul and stirred its deepest feelings, no matter how the world, or time, or circumstance had corroded or sealed them down. Very pure and fresh it was, too, in the very spring-tide of its perfection, like the young thing through whose lips its richness came. She sang divinely; all the pathos and passion of her nature seemed to rise up in her voice, and send it forth laden with the emotions, and hopes, and fears that shook her to the very root of feeling. The signor was in ecstasies; his enthusiasm seemed to ooze out of his finger-ends; his breath came in low short gasps, as though he feared to stir the current of air, lest it should hinder her glorious voice travelling to his ear; his limbs trembled, his nostrils dilated, and his head swayed to and fro, keeping time to

the music. Suddenly her voice rose into a sweeping gust of passion; it should have melted away into a tender wail, but it rose higher and higher. The musician started with wonder. The poor singer had no longer control over herself, over her voice; it swelled, rolled, quivered, and burst into an hysterical cry. She cast the music to the ground, flung herself into a seat.

“It breaks my heart! it breaks my heart!” The words fell in broken accents from her lips; her voice was drowned in tears; she buried her face in her hands; the great sobs climbed up in her throat, and for the moment choked her utterance. Signor Marini was bewildered. This was not the first time he had seen a singer affected and overcome by her own song. He was himself in a perfect ecstasy at the power she had displayed. His first impulse was to kneel at her side and chafe

her hands, and strive to soothe her overwrought feelings in the best way he could. His sympathetic excitement found vent in the rapid utterance of his soft Southern tongue, interspersed with unintelligible English phrases. She never heeded him, but still wept on, as though it had been no figure of speech she had used and her heart was really breaking. In his helpless anxiety he would have flown to the bell and rang for assistance; but she hindered him by a gesture, and found breath to exclaim, agitatedly—

“No, don’t ring, please! It is not often I give way like this ; I shall be better soon.”

Slowly she conquered her hysterical feelings, drove back her sobs, and looked up with an April smile upon her face, though her eyes still glistened and their long dark lashes were laden with tears.

“I am quite ashamed of myself,” she

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said, "for making such a scene. I felt from the first I should break down; the only wonder is how I kept up so long."

"Ah! signora," the old man replied, "what you call 'breaking down' was a greater tribute to the glorious master than the steady upsoaring of the grandest voice that sings without a soul. You make even Mozart doubly glorious, when you illustrate him with your beautiful voice, and still more beautiful sympathetic soul. You make me feel so I should like to be broke down with you."

He seemed crestfallen and disappointed when he found that her emotion was not caused by the music only, but that her own heavy heart and anxious spirit heightened and accelerated its effect. She told him frankly how much her fears had been roused for her father's sake; even as she was speaking, her quick ear detected

the well-known step ascending the stairs. She flew to the door, threw it open, and in a moment more clasped her arms round him and drew him into the room. A hurried "Thank God!" escaped her lips. He had come home at last; looking sad and worn and haggard it was true, but safe and well, uninjured in life or limb. Now that she saw him there and held him in her arms again, she knew what her nameless fears had been.

The old singing master saw the tender meeting, and left the room by another door unnoticed and unseen. A world of mournful tenderness stole over his face as he descended the stairs. His thoughts flew back, through time and distance, to a little grave, where his only child, a young loving girl, had been buried years ago. With just such tender arms she had clasped his neck, with just such eyes had looked

handsome face and soft grey hair. There were no more tears, no more misgivings now. Her heart re-echoed the loving Juliet's words, "Since he is well then nothing can be ill." Having kissed and hugged him to her heart's content, she made him sit down and placed herself on a low stool beside him, still retaining one of his hands in a soft caress.

"There," she said, "I don't believe you deserve half the petting I've given you, but you're welcome to it; only you must apologize for playing the truant as you've done this morning, and promise never to do it again." He seemed scarcely to comprehend what she was saying, but looked down upon her face with a nervous, anxious look.

"It is all over now, my child," he said, "my poor little Philippa; no more hope. I know the worst."

Philippa was recalled from the realms of

sentiment and feeling, and forced to look on actual facts; she saw that he had no good news to tell her. She put off her pretty coaxing way, and a look of earnest inquiry crept into her eyes and searched into her father's face, as though she would know the truth, all the truth.

"What is this terrible worst that has come so suddenly upon us, papa?" she asked.

"I have told you, child; cannot you understand we are ruined?" he answered, somewhat impatiently, as though he did not wish to be pressed further on the subject.

"Ah, but I want to know, how and why, and what that word 'ruin' actually means," she answered, with an intent look of persevering inquiry settling on her face. "I cannot rest satisfied with a single word. I must be told circumstances and things. Suppose I were hungry, would you give

me a stone, when I asked for bread? and my heart is hungry, papa dear—hungry for part of your trouble, and unsatisfied until I share it with you. Come, things are rarely so bad as they seem, and even if they are at their worst——”

“As they are, Philippa,” he answered. “All is lost.”

“Not all, while we have got one another,” she said. “We two together, strong in love and hope, should be able to face bad fortune bravely. But all is not lost, dear; an honest man never loses all while he has a good name left, and you, I am sure, have never perilled yours.”

“No, never my good name,” he answered. “I have only been what is called my own enemy, Philippa.” Then he added, with deep anguish filling his voice, “and yours too, God help me! yours too, my child!”

“Not mine, papa; never mine,” she ex-



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claimed quickly. "But come, we are wasting time; you are trying to wean my thoughts away from things I must know."

"God knows, I would have made your life all sunshine if I could," he said, laying his hand caressingly upon her bright brown hair; "but you are so young, Philippa—such a girl to be trusted with the troubles of a man!"

"Well, girl as I am," she answered, "I may be woman enough to bear a trouble that would crush out the senses of a man; try me, and see if I do not comfort you, darling."

There was no evading her persistent will. Briefly, and avoiding all business technicalities, he told her all she desired to know. It was the old story; such a one as befalls some man nearly every day. He had struck up an intimacy with a man on 'Change, for whose intellect and clear-sighted business

qualities he had a profound respect. They called themselves friends, and travelled for a few months on the world's highway together, Mr. Soames doing a great deal of business, and amazing Mr. Maitland by his great good fortune.

"My dear Maitland," Mr. Soames had said one day, "you are too timid a man to make a fortune rapidly, indeed to make a fortune at all. A rich man like you" (it tickled Mr. Maitland's ears and delighted his heart to be called a *rich man*) "ought to be above small ventures, and go in for great gains."

Led from one thing to another by this insinuating friend, Mr. Maitland, under his guidance, ventured his hundreds and won; made bolder by success he ventured thousands, and in a moment of feverish excitement threw all he had in the world into some grand scheme of Mr. Soames's making.

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He had been away for the last six weeks, during which time he had heard constantly from his "friend" that all was well. He had returned, as it has been seen, to find that all was ill; that the whole of the hopeful affair had broken and Mr. Soames absconded, with well-filled pockets no doubt. No one knew whither he had gone, and Mr. Maitland knew now that he was a ruined man—ruined utterly. All this he told to Philippa, bringing as many extenuating circumstances as he could to account for his reckless folly. He ended with saying—

"It was all for your sake, Philippa. I wanted my little girl to hold up her head with the best."

"She can do that as it is," replied Philippa, a proud, dangerous gleam lighting her eye as she spoke; "but it is a poor holding-up that depends on the length of the purse, papa. I think I understand now,"

she added, her practical mind revealing itself and coming down to the plain prose of their circumstances at once; "the fact is we have no money to get on with, pay our bills and all those sorts of things. Is that it?"

"That is it exactly," replied Mr. Maitland, growing calmer beneath her influence, "and without money how are we to live?"

"I'm not afraid," she answered; "there are thousands of people in the world who have no money but what they work for—are there not?"

"Certainly there are," he answered.

"Well then, why shouldn't we work as well as they; I'm sure I can do something," said Philippa.

"Don't talk nonsense!" said Mr. Maitland, almost angrily; "the idea of you, of my child, working!"

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“But other men’s children work; why shouldn’t I?”

“They are used to it; you are not.”

“Then, now that we are in necessity, the sooner I get used to it the better,” said Philippa, brightly. “I have been a butterfly long enough; now I shall join the working bees of the world, and I think I shall like the change. We have never been really rich, dear. I believe at the best of times our affairs have been fluctuating,” she added, sliding her arms caressingly around his neck; “now we shall be poor. I believe that poor people may be happy sometimes, and I shall try to make poverty so agreeable to my dear old dad that he will be sorry when it goes away. Ah!” she exclaimed, as though struck by a sudden thought, “but after all we are not so badly off; there’s my three thousand pounds! Papa, I’ll give you that!”

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Philippa was scarcely prepared for the effect her words produced upon her father. A spasm of positive pain contracted his features; he shrank from her, as though she had dealt him an invisible blow, and turned away his face. A sigh deepening into a groan burst from his lips, bringing these almost inaudible words with it:—

“I told you I was your enemy, child; it is true. I, who love you best in all this world, have done you the cruellest wrong. Don’t stop me; let me speak out while I can,” he added, speaking rapidly. “It is gone—all gone! Your mother believed in me; she thought a father was the fittest person to look after the interests of his child; she divided all she had between us two, and left me sole trustee of the little fortune that fell to your share. I—I soon squandered mine, then broke my trust and—and robbed my child!”

"You must know exactly how things are, Philippa," he rejoined; "you don't quite understand what I have done. If you were to marry, your husband could put me in the dock for breach of trust, and have me tried like a common thief!"

The great beads of perspiration oozed out upon his forehead as he spoke. Philippa sprang up, put her hands to her ears, and in deep agitation answered him—

"I'll hear no more, no more," she said. "My husband rise up to brand my father! The possibility of such a thing is horrible and unnatural. I shall never marry, papa, never; at least such a man as could do so vile a thing. No one need ever know; they never shall know from my lips how things have been. Don't think, don't speak of them any more; what is done is done. It is no use brooding over the past, thinking of what has or what might have been; we

must learn to face what is. I can bear anything," she added, her manner and voice becoming exquisitely soft and tender, "except your self-upbraidings and vain regrets; they would break my heart. We have need of all our energies, all our courage, dear papa! don't be downhearted; we must help one another to be strong."

Although Mr. Maitland reproached himself passionately, and felt sincerely the desolation he had brought upon both their lives, yet it was no difficult task to reconcile him to himself. Philippa was a noble advocate, and laboured hard to excuse his reckless folly, and bring it in as justifiable ambition. He accepted her arguments, and allowed her generous spirit to give the verdict in his favour. She persuaded him, and he persuaded himself, that he had been led to great risks for her sake: that he had used her money for her own advantage



and with the best intentions, though his intents had woefully miscarried; that he deserved the commiseration of all the world, and most of all from her. The idea of his culpable weak-mindedness and love of speculation was smothered between them by mutual consent. Having talked and reasoned him into a calmer state of mind, Philippa began to interest him in her plans for the future. Many wild schemes she brought forward, and finding them impracticable, rejected and turned her thoughts to something else; but her ideas, as she set them up, preparing them for action, were bowled over one after the other, till she felt inclined to give up the game. Then she laughed at her lack of invention, but declared she should think of something very good and very practical by-and-by.

They sat a long time that evening discussing their affairs. They were not driven

to extremities yet. They might take some little time to consider and decide their mode of action. They had plate, jewellery, and a house full of furniture. They would not consider themselves absolutely destitute while these things lasted. Presently Philippa startled her father by an exclamation.

“I know! it is as clear as daylight now! I have peeped into the right corner of my brain, and found a bright idea at last! There’s your violin, papa, and Jasper Brantynham!”

Mr. Maitland was bewildered. His violin and Jasper Brantynham! what possible connexion could there be between the two—what could she mean? He pressed her to explain herself; she only laughed.

“No,” she answered, “you have winged so many of my young birds before they had fairly left the nest, I shall not trust this one



## CHAPTER III.

### FORESHADOWS.

**A**SPER BRANTYNHAM was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, of about six-and-twenty; finely proportioned, with a fair open countenance and large bright blue eyes full of good nature and shrewd common sense; he wore no beard, but had a profusion of light curly hair, which would sometimes fall over his forehead, and he had a habit of tossing it back with a graceful motion of the head that was characteristic, to say the least of it, and won him many a fair admirer. He had beautiful hands and feet, a fact he was well aware of, and he took care always to set them off to the best advantage, wearing the neatest of

boots and best fitting of gloves. Though fully aware of the advantages nature had given him, he was no fop, and even in his earlier days had nothing of puppyhood about him.

The Brantynhams of Brantynham were an old family, not rich, but always holding a high position, such as a good name and fame alone can give, in their native county. They had held the same lands and lived in the same old-fashioned hall from generation to generation, with never a blot on their escutcheon. A peculiar character of their own had these Brantynhams, corroded by no mean vices or polished follies. They were charitable in their dealings with the poor, and in their judgment of the rich—charity of the latter quality being, perhaps, the rarer of the two. They were a fiery, large-hearted race. Their one failing was *pride*—that sin by which angels fell—and an unlimited confi-

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dence in themselves and their doings, which brooked no interference either from friend or foe. Being such true gentlefolk as they were, they could afford to despise those petty advantages of purse or person that are held so dear by meaner souls.

Jasper Brantynham, who was the present heir to the estate, differed in no way from the rest of his family. He was what is commonly called a splendid-looking fellow, large-limbed as a Titan of old, and as noble-hearted as the noblest hero of ancient story. Fond he was of boating, cricketing, and other athletic sports, as English gentlemen of fine physique generally are; but he was not unmindful of that mental culture which strengthens and expands the mind, affecting it as athletic exercises affect the body. He had taken a very good degree at Cambridge, had eaten the necessary number of dinners at Lincoln's Inn, had passed his

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examination, and as he could now write himself "barrister-at-law" he was ready to undertake such legal business as any confiding solicitor would be inclined to trust to an untried man. He did not, however, trouble himself to look after business, but waited till it should come to him. Meanwhile, having a handsome allowance, such as his father thought fitting for his son and heir, he managed to amuse himself tolerably well in this great metropolis, where pleasure is always to be had when the seeker is willing to pay for it. He was fond of music and indulged in the luxury of a stall at the opera, and rarely failed to make his appearance there on Tuesdays and Saturdays; irregular nights he did not patronize, but on those two evenings of the week his friends knew always where to find him. He was an admirer of the drama too, as well as a student of poetry

and painting; indeed he devoted himself to all that was beautiful in art or nature, but especially to Philippa Maitland, for whom he had a chivalrous and high regard, to call it at present by no warmer name.

He had become acquainted with Mr. Maitland at a literary club, of which they both were members, and by him had been invited home one night and introduced to his daughter Philippa. From the hour of his first introduction, whenever he could find a decent excuse, Jasper Brantynham found his way to the lonely house at Knightsbridge, and was content to play chess with the father, and even consent to be beaten, to laugh and applaud the most atrocious puns, in order that he might occasionally have the privilege of listening to Philippa's voice or looking upon her glorious face, little dreaming he was looking himself into love. He cared for no other woman under

the sun, but he never thought of loving her, as a man should love a woman with whom he desires to share his life. Indeed he had no more thought of marrying than a child in long clothes, still, wherever he went, Philippa's face haunted him; "he saw that face all faces among." Sometimes he felt vexed at the persistent way in which her calm serene beauty rose up in his mind, when he would fain have thought of other things. Without his will, without her own, her face stood between him and the world beyond; as though it were to become a part of his future, and had already set its mark upon his soul and he knew it not.

The morning following that on which Philippa had learned the trouble that had come upon them, Jasper Brantynham was lounging in his easy-chair, enjoying his weed and reading the "Quarterly," when there was a ring at the bell. He glanced



at his watch; it was not yet eleven o'clock.

“What an unearthly hour for visitors! Some fellows dropping in to breakfast, I suppose,” he thought. He threw down the paper, yawned lazily as his clerk entered, though not to usher in visitors to breakfast, but to say that a lady wished to see Mr. Brantynham.

“A lady!” repeated Jasper, springing from his seat, and flinging his cigar end under the grate. “What sort of a lady? Do you know who she is?”

“No, sir; but it is a young lady. I can tell that by her voice.”

“Umph! I don’t encourage ladies here generally,” said Jasper; “but show her in.” The man left the room, but reappeared in a moment, showing in Philippa Maitland!

“Good Heavens! Miss Maitland! Philippa!” exclaimed Jasper, hurrying forward to grasp her hand.

“I—I am sure you must be surprised to see me,” she answered, with some agitation, “and indeed I am surprised to find myself here. I hardly know how to apologize for my coming.”

“Pray don’t apologize at all,” he answered; “a fair face is too rare and too welcome a visitant to my bachelor quarters to need any apology when it comes.” He had scarcely said the words when he fancied that his allusion to his “bachelor quarters” might have an embarrassing effect upon her, so he hastened to add: “It is always a pleasure to see you, Miss Maitland; but it is a double one now, for I hope you have come to demand some service of me, to give me my first brief perhaps. I hope it will be a difficult case, and I may win it. I should like my maiden speech to be in your cause”

Poor Philippa! she had felt so brave an

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hour ago, but now that she found herself there, with Jasper Brantynham's eyes—and such kind and friendly eyes—upon her, she was embarrassed, and hardly knew how to do her errand. It had seemed so natural, so easy to speak. Her heart was full of her great trouble, she fancied it would overflow as soon as she saw his face; but now that he stood before her holding her hand, and looking so kindly on her, the words would not come; when she tried to speak blushes came to her cheek instead of words to her lips. She felt now that she had no business there, that her coming was a rash, imprudent thing. What right had she to bring her domestic griefs to him? he had no part in them. She saw he had been astonished at her appearance in his private chambers, and felt that she had compromised herself in his eyes by coming there. Impulsively the words fell from her lips :—

“ Oh, Mr. Brantynham, pray excuse me ! I wish I had not come.”

He saw how much she was agitated and embarrassed, and tried to reconcile her to herself and put her at her ease.

“ Don’t say that, Miss Maitland ! pray don’t say that !” he answered. “ I see that something has happened to distress you greatly ; take your own time to tell me what it is, and meanwhile believe that I am incapable of misjudging you in a thought, nay in the shadow of a thought. Treat me as a brother, who has a right to your confidence, a right to help you, and I will be as sincere and honest with you as a brother should.”

“ You are very kind—you have always been kind,” said Philippa, lifting her grateful eyes to his face, “ and we have so few friends, that when I learned we were poor and ruined I could think of no one but you

for me far more than for himself. Poor father!" she added, with a tender smile, "he always thought so much of me."

"So it seems," muttered Jasper to himself; then he added aloud, "But at least *you* are no sufferer, Miss Maitland? your father has often told me *you* were provided for."

"Did he?" replied Philippa, surprised that her father's confidence had gone so far. "Ah! he was always so sanguine; what he intended and desired to do he fancied was done."

"Then have you nothing to fall back upon?" inquired Jasper, scrutinizing her face; "no small fortune of your own?"

"None," replied Philippa, drawing a long breath.

"I am sorry for it," said Jasper. "A man can always rough it somehow——"

"My father cannot," said Philippa; "you

have no idea how wan and worn he is; the worry of the last twenty-four hours seems to have aged him years."

"*You* look worn and ill too," rejoined Jasper, bending a tender look upon the beautiful face, which certainly justified his remark. She looked very unlike her usually blooming self. "I don't think *you* ought to be troubled in this business; you are too young to take this world's work upon your shoulders. I should like to have a talk with your father; why did not he come with you?"

"Because I never told him I was coming," she answered. "He is so proud, so sensitive, he might have objected to my coming, especially if—if he knew it was to ask you a favour."

"I shall be far more favoured by your asking than you will be by my doing you this favour, as you please to call it. What is

it?"—"Philippa," he was going to say, but he stayed the word upon his lips; it might be that he would speak it one day, but not now, this was not the time. "Tax my will to the utmost," he added, "you will not find it wanting; if I have only the power, there is nothing I will not do to ease you in the slightest matter."

Philippa could only thank him for his ready sympathy. This she did in the simplest way, and took him fully into her confidence, concerning her hopes and intentions for the future. She had nothing more to say about the past.

"We are not quite without resources, but we shall be soon; and," she added, smiling, "I don't want to be caught like one of the idle virgins, who had no oil in her lamp when the bridegroom came. Our bridegroom will be poverty, and I want to *prepare* for him and meet him with plenty."

“But surely you have time before you,” said Jasper; “there can be no necessity to concern yourself at once?”

“There is no time like the present,” replied Philippa; “if we can only seize him as he flies, he will help us in the future. It is no use to sit moaning till the eleventh hour, and then find out how dark it is; I think we must try and set about some sort of work at once. I have not yet made up my mind what I shall do”—(she spoke as though she had only to choose her work and it would be ready to her hand)—“but whatever it is, I don’t suppose I can earn enough for two.” She spoke seriously, and indeed she was thoroughly in earnest.

With the profoundest admiration and respect, Jasper gazed at the girl; so regal in beauty, so young in years, and withal so brave! filled with that bravery that fears no danger because it knows of none;



ready, nay eager, to leave her quiet girl-life of ease and comfort and face the world, and join the workers therein who toil day by day for their daily bread. The idea of that superb creature so toiling struck Jasper as being unnatural, absurd, quite out of the order of things; he was almost angry with her for suggesting it.

“Don’t talk so!” he said, excitedly; “you positively pain me when you speak in such a way. The idea of these little hands working for their daily bread!” He took her hands as he spoke, and looked upon them with pitying tenderness; she released them quietly from his grasp as she answered—

“And why not? Do you think women are only made to be spoilt and petted, caressed and flattered, to share in the pleasant sunshine of home, and when the storm comes to sit with idle hands moaning helplessly?”

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“No matter what I think,” he answered, “I don’t believe there are many as beautiful and good as you.”

A burning blush rose in Philippa’s cheeks; her eyes drooped beneath his earnest look as she said—

“I don’t see anything particularly good in doing one’s duty; especially upon compulsion,” she added, smiling slightly, “and I am compelled to mine. I don’t want to talk about myself, please, but about papa—” She hesitated. Jasper was sorry to shift the conversation. At that moment she was an object of all-absorbing interest to him; he would rather have talked about her than of any other thing or creature under the sun. He let her hesitate; he did not help her with a word, a remark, or even a suggestion, but continued silently regarding her. After a brief embarrassing pause she continued rapidly, as though eager to get the words spoken—

"You know how beautifully papa plays the violin? You have often said he was born a genius, and I thought that perhaps you might help him to turn his musical talent to account."

"I would most willingly," answered Jasper, "if you would only tell me how, or even give me a suggestion."

This was not exactly the answer she expected; she had hoped the suggestion would come from him. As it did not she was quite prepared to give it.

"I know how intimate you are with the Opera people—the managers, I mean," she added; "I have heard you talk of them so often—and I thought that perhaps, with your interest, he might get into the orchestra; not as first violin, though of course he is quite able to take it," she added with pardonable vanity, "but as second, third, anything, for ever so little pay, so

that he might feel he was doing something. I don't think he would mind doing that. No gentleman need be ashamed of the musical profession; it is a refined and honourable one."

"No gentleman need ever be ashamed of doing any honest thing to gain his bread," rejoined Jasper; "he ought only to be ashamed of the pride which prevents him doing so."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Philippa, brightening; "though it is exactly what I should have expected of you. Do you think there is a chance for him?" She looked earnestly, anxiously in his face, waiting his answer. He could not tell her how infinitesimal the chance really was.

"I'll try," he said; "I'll do my utmost for him, Miss Maitland. But do not count too much on my success; I could not bear a disappointment to come to you through me."

"It would not pain me if it did," she answered, "for I should know you had done your best; that is enough to make me grateful." And her heart swelled and her hands went out to him gratefully as she spoke. "I'll go now," she added; "I have said what I came to say, and I am thankful to you for listening to me so kindly."

"And I am grateful that you came to me," he answered, taking her hands in his and keeping them there. "And now that you have taken me into your confidence, I mean to entrench myself there and not be cast out. Will you promise to keep me informed of all your proceedings? and in any difficulty or trouble that may arise, to rely on me as a friend in whose honour and good-will you may trust sacredly?"

"I do promise," she said, "more gratefully than I have words to tell. I hope I may live to repay you for what you have done for me."

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“ Even your thanks are paid in advance,” he said, “ for as yet I have done nothing.”

“ You have, you have!” she answered, her colour heightening. “ You have listened to me with patient sympathy, you have reconciled me to my new life; and as you have not ridiculed or despised the thought of labour, I shall not feel disgraced or degraded by the act.”

Her eyes became moist with tears, and her voice was full of them; not the tears of shame or sorrow, but rising from a gratitude so sweet to feel. Impulsively she bent her head, left a kiss upon his hand, and was gone.

It was done in a second, before Jasper had time to think or speak. He was so taken by surprise, he had not even the wit to follow or stay her going. He found himself standing staring] at the vacant space which a second ago had been filled with Philippa. It was too late to follow

her; indeed he could not, even if he would, in his present costume, for he had been surprised in his dressing-gown and slippers. He rushed to the window just as a small butcher boy ran full against her with his laden tray, and at the same moment a gentleman in superfine broadcloth bent his head and stared into the beautiful face. Jasper would fain have rushed down and beaten the boy within an inch of his life, and kicked the older sinner from one end of Verulam Place to the other; but such a proceeding was impracticable. He stirred his fire savagely, and then sat staring at it silently, smoking rapidly and thinking. Suddenly he flung his cigar under the grate, exclaiming—

“Jasper Brantynham, you’re a fool!”





## CHAPTER IV.

### NEGOTIATIONS.

**A**CCORDING to his promise, Jasper Brantynham interested himself in behalf of Philippa's father. It was still November, and the opera season would not commence till April or May. Even if he were fortunate enough to succeed in getting Mr. Maitland an engagement in the orchestra, some months must elapse before any benefit could be derived from such engagement. However, it would give him something to look forward to.

The morning after Philippa's unexpected visit to his chambers Jasper set off, at an early hour, to endeavour to get an inter-



view with his friend Mr. Gwynn, who had large stakes and was deeply interested in the affairs of the opera. He was not the manager, nor did his name appear in any way officially connected with the establishment. He might, however, be described as a sort of sleeping partner, who in a certain way managed the manager. His name was held almost in as much awe as that of the august individual himself.

Jasper Brantynham was fortunate enough to find Mr. Gwynn at home, and on being shown into his study, found him sitting writing, surrounded by books, newspapers, pamphlets, letters, and all the paraphernalia of a busy business man. He glanced up as Jasper entered; nodded, smiled, pointed to a chair, and threw him the *Times*, saying—

“Amuse yourself for the next ten minutes, will you, old fellow? I’m in a hurry to save the post.”

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Without further ceremony or remark, he went on scribbling as though absorbed by his subject; for the next few minutes nothing was heard but the scratching of his pen and the rustling of the newspaper. Mr. Gwynn soon finished his letters, despatched them to the post, and then turned genially to his visitor, saying—

“Well, Brantynham, my boy, what can I do for you? I know you want something, or you would never have turned up at this unearthly hour. Come, what is it? Fire away.”

Being invited in such friendly terms to “fire away,” Jasper was not long in making his business known. He tried first to interest Mr. Gwynn in Mr. Maitland’s affairs, giving an account or brief sketch of his misfortunes, making what he considered some splendid points by the way, and giving to the picture some daring touches

of his own. Mr. Gwynn listened to him attentively, screwed up his lips, stirred the fire, and shook his head dubiously, saying—

“I tell you at once emphatically, Brantynham, your scheme wont do.”

“But how can you judge until you have seen and heard my friend Mr. Maitland? How can you possibly tell whether my scheme, as you call it, will do or not?” said Jasper, with some signs of impatience.

“How?” repeated Mr. Gwynn, with a jerk of his head and a half smile, that Jasper could hardly tell how far he was in earnest or in jest. “Why, how does a man criticise a picture he has never seen, a book he has never read, or give you a thrilling description of a terrible catastrophe he has never witnessed? My dear fellow, it often happens in this world that we are forced to pass judgment upon a matter at once and without deliberation.”

“Ah!” replied Jasper, “rather awkward that. To judge without deliberation on a matter of which you know nothing—as in the case I’ve mooted—must be slightly embarrassing to all parties concerned. I suppose that accounts for your judgment so often being wrong.”

“Not at all,” replied Mr. Gwynn. “One man will argue and reason and wander about through subtle winding ways, and find himself at the wrong side of the hedge at last. Another will shut his eyes, make a leap in the dark, and jump into the arms of truth.”

“I’ll note that down as a hint to the British jury,” said Jasper; “they may improve upon it, and spare their deliberations while they accelerate business. It would be a great saving to the country, and I dare say there would be just about the same amount of justice as there is now.”

But about my friend, Gwynn? Come, I shall not let you judge of him in your off-hand fashion. There can be no harm in your seeing him and hearing what he can do. You have no idea what a fine musician he is."

"Oh! I am not doubting his talents, but his power of applying them," replied Mr. Gwynn; "professional life is a very different thing in reality to what the amateur imagines it to be. It needs hard work, sharp drill, and strict discipline to make things go easily. If your friend Mr. Maitland has lived, as you say, for fifty years lord of himself, he would not easily shake down into a state of order and obedience."

"He is a gentleman," said Jasper, "and would readily adapt himself to any condition of life it proved necessary he should."

"You think so," rejoined Mr. Gwynn, "but I know better. I've had more expe-

rience of that sort of gentry than you have, and I tell you the poor gentleman is a most cantankerous, tetchy, and unpleasant party to deal with."

"Misfortunes are apt to sharpen our sensitive feelings," said Jasper, reproachfully.

"Exactly!" answered his friend; "but misfortune would do a much kinder and wiser thing if it blunted them, and in giving the blow destroyed the sense of feeling. I know the species 'poor gentlemen' well, Jasper: they live in a state of chronic injury—they seem to have mental corns growing everywhere; one is always afraid of treading on them, and eliciting a howl of indignation; they are always being wounded, and their wounds never heal. Besides, established professionals will not work well with amateurs; they don't like it, and whenever the scheme is tried,

there is sure to be a split in the Cabinet."

"How pitilessly you speak," said Jasper; "and yet I know no man who does so much to relieve the very class of whom you speak so slightly."

"Relieve them? yes, but that is a very different matter to *employing* them," replied Mr. Gwynn. "I tell you candidly I prefer transacting business with business people, who 'are to the manner born.'"

"But why should not a well-born, well-educated gentleman be a good man of business?" inquired Jasper.

"I don't know," answered Mr. Gwynn; "but they very rarely are—daily experience tells us that."

"But about my friend?" said Jasper, going back to his point. "You must do something for him; he is not one of these thin-skinned people you need be afraid to

handle. I am sure he would gladly do anything to get his living in an honest, respectable way; he and—and his daughter are terribly reduced.” The thought of Philippa sent the blood rushing over his cheek and brows; he tried to frown it down—it was so ridiculous, he thought, “to blush for nothing;” but his heart beat, and the scarlet flush stayed upon his face. He felt embarrassed as he looked up and caught Mr. Gwynn’s piercing glance fixed upon him; he bit his lip from sheer vexation, and hurried to the end of his sentence: “I think I told you Mr. Maitland had speculated largely and lost every shilling he possessed; he is now literally a ruined man.”

“As a rule, I abominate the genus ‘ruined man,’” rejoined Mr. Gwynn, with a peculiar smile, which masked his meaning, so that his friends scarcely knew whether



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he was in jest or in earnest; "not because they are ruined," he added, "but for the qualities of mind which generally bring ruin about. Ruined men are, in most cases, those who have recklessly speculated with other people's money and lost."

"Then surely you have some sympathy with those whom they have betrayed—the innocent people they have ruined?" said Jasper, interrupting him quickly.

"Sympathy?—yes ; respect ?—no," replied Mr. Gwynn. "A man who blindly and rashly trusts another with his whole fortune, and allows his family to be impoverished and his home to be gambled away, is not one with whom I should like to have any business relations; a man who is regardless of his own interests cannot be careful of mine. I could not expect him to transact my business who grossly mismanaged his own. I may relieve such men in their

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necessity, but I could never avail myself of their talents. In all business matters I like to do with men with clear heads and strong hearts, with never a weak spot where ruin could creep in—men who will not allow themselves to be ruined.”

“You speak in a purely mercantile spirit,” replied Jasper. “You must admit that men of the kindest hearts and most delicate feelings are those who are most easily deceived, and deserve something better than your sweeping condemnation.”

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Gwynn, reflectingly. “I don’t think I quite appreciate the delicate feelings which allow a man to put his home in peril or jeopardize the welfare of his wife and children to ‘oblige a friend.’”

“Well, I see you won’t understand me,” replied Jasper, “and if we were to talk for ever we should not agree. I’m sorry I

troubled you about my friend. I must see what I can do for him elsewhere;" and as he spoke he rose to go.

"No ; don't be in such a hurry, old fellow," said Mr. Gwynn, laying a detaining hand upon him ; "though I cannot help you in one way, perhaps I can in another. You said your friend had a daughter, didn't you? Is she decent-looking?"

"Decent-looking!" repeated Jasper. "My dear Gwynn, what an absurd question! She is the most superb creature you ever saw."

"Umph!" said Mr. Gwynn, compressing his lips and wrinkling up his brows, as some men do when they are thoughtful. "I don't think I've an opening for anything in the superb line ; if she were pretty, petite, and graceful, I might do something for her in the ballet way."

"In the ballet way!" echoed Jasper.

"Not exactly as a figurante," rejoined

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Mr. Gwynn, as though modifying the idea, "but I might have utilized her as Queen of the Air, or something of that kind."

For a second the idea of Philippa figuring as Queen of the Air on the stage of the Royal Italian Opera struck Jasper dumb; there was something absurd as well as offensive in it. He was half tempted to laugh, half inclined to be angry, but a moment's reflection convinced him that no offence could have been intended, Philippa Maitland being quite a stranger to Mr. Gwynn, who no doubt spoke with the idea of obliging him by serving his friends in the way that was most convenient to him. Jasper smiled loftily as he answered—

"My dear Gwynn, you don't know what you are talking about. If you only knew Miss Maitland, you would never have spoken or even thought of her in connexion with such a subject. It was not in her behalf

but in her father's that I spoke to you; but I see it is of no use. I'm sorry I troubled you." Jasper could not help feeling disappointed, and showing that he was so, as he took up his hat to go. Mr. Gwynn's parting words, however, somewhat raised his spirits.

"Well, Jasper," he said, "I'll see your friend, and if I can conscientiously do anything to serve him, trust me I will." They shook hands and parted, Jasper carrying with him a grain of hope to feed Philippa's anxious ears.

When the endeavour to obtain a musical engagement for him was first broached to Mr. Maitland, the idea was somewhat repugnant to him; he shrank from the thought of his beloved instrument mingling with its larger brethren, joining with the brass-throated band, and losing its sweet voice in theirs. He had a sort of

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sensitive feeling as though it were a human creature, and might be capricious and refuse to speak to strange ears, or make its pathetic appeal to strange hearts; it needed however but a few minutes' talk, a few minutes' argument, to convince him that the trial must be made—it was for bread; he must do something, and there are so few things a broken-down gentleman of no profession, no great scholarship, can do to gain his livelihood.

Mr. Maitland, it must be owned, had no talent for anything except speculation and violin playing; the first had ruined him, and as he had neither money nor credit, he could speculate no more; he was therefore soon convinced, that he must try what his violin could do: hitherto it had administered to his pleasure, now it must administer to his necessities. He thanked Mr. Brantynham in a dull, spiritless way

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for the exertions he was making in his behalf, and then crept up into his own room, and after a long silence he took out his violin, tuned it, coaxed it, sighed over it, then laid his cheek upon it lovingly, drew the bow across the strings, and made it speak to him in the language he loved to hear, and in tones his own hand could bring forth, his own soul translate. Philippa knew his moods, and did not attempt to intrude upon him; but she listened anxiously for awhile. At first the music he made was low and harsh, as though the tortured strings cried from the instrument; then it softened and changed to a weird wailing, the old man's pained spirit seemed to find utterance in the mournful sound; gradually it changed again and "discoursed sweet music" in tones almost as soft and plaintive as a woman's voice. The anxious expression

passed from Philippa's face, she gave a gentle sigh of thanksgiving, and said to Jasper Brantynham, who stood by her side—

“He is happier now—I can always tell the state of his mind from the way he plays. I have known him fly upstairs in a perfect storm of rage and make his violin scream, as though he hurt it; but before he has been playing very long its tone changes, and the tone of his mind changes with it; when he comes downstairs again the storm has passed and he is calm and contented.”

“That is always the way with very excitable natures,” said Jasper; “they are easily roused, easily calmed. *You* always seem calm and unruffled, Miss Maitland. I wonder whether you really are so?”

Mr. Brantynham had a habit of speculating upon things that were hidden from



him in human nature, as well as in other matters, and there was much in Philippa that puzzled him extremely. He was looking at her now with a scrutinizing eye, as though watching for some light to leap up in her face, and reveal something more of her nature than the world saw, but he was disappointed.

“You must not trust to appearances,” she answered; “don’t you know that the strongest currents underlie the smoothest lakes, and the calmest waters are sometimes stirred by the wildest storms? But don’t wonder about me, please,” she added, changing her tone quickly; “think that I am anything except ungrateful—indeed I am not that, though I hardly know how to thank you for what you have done for us.” Her voice was full of earnest feeling, and her eyes grew humid as she spoke.

“You may easily do that,” he said, “for,

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as yet, I have done nothing; but I mean to run you deeply in debt before I have done—ay, and you will find me no easy creditor. I shall demand my due with interest.”

“And you shall have it to the uttermost,” she answered, a grateful glow overspreading her face; already she felt she owed him more for kindness given than she ever could repay.

“Make no rash promises,” he rejoined, with a warning gesture.

“I don’t,” she answered; “for I know you would never ask for anything I ought not to be proud and happy to give you.”

“You have faith in my modesty, at least.” And as he spoke he took her hand, and looked down upon the beautiful face with eyes eloquent with strong feeling; they almost seemed to say, “I love you, Philippa—have you any love to give me in return?”

Many times his lips had been upon the point of saying so much, but he dared not. There were so many things which drew him back from making an open avowal to Philippa Maitland; he knew this, yet he could not abstain from the sight of her. He was drifting fast towards those mysterious lovelands where all the barriers which the world, prudence, or reason may raise up, disappear like mist before the sun, or like ropes of sand that should strive to bind the sea. More than once he felt his danger, and left the house, vowing that though he would still labour in her father's cause, yet he would never look upon her face again—he would think of her no more; but still he went on seeing and thinking of her more than ever.

Under his auspices a meeting was arranged between Mr. Gwynn and Mr. Maitland. All men who have had to seek

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for employment, even under the most favourable circumstances, know how difficult it is to obtain it: Mr. Maitland found it no easier than others had done before him. Mr. Gwynn saw and acknowledged at once the proficiency (marvellous for an amateur) which he had gained as a violin-player, and was astonished at his mastery over that difficult instrument. They had a long and pleasant gossip on musical affairs generally. Mr. Gwynn spoke well upon the subject, and Mr. Maitland listened and spoke with the appreciative and enthusiastic spirit of a genius. His visitor remained with him an unconscionable time, and kept turning his eyes expectantly towards the door; perhaps his curiosity had been roused by Mr. Brantynham's praises, and he hoped to catch a glimpse of Philippa; if it were so he was disappointed—no Miss Maitland appeared.

At length Mr. Gwynn took his leave, protesting that he would keep Mr. Maitland's requirements and genius (which latter indeed he would find it difficult to forget) in mind, and would do what he could for him. He would see him again before any final arrangements were made for the operatic season, but he could make no definite promises. Much more he said to the same purpose, then they shook hands and parted.

Mr. Maitland gave his daughter a detailed account of the interview; he was in high spirits, as sanguine natures are apt to be on the slightest encouragement; but Philippa shook her head, and thought nothing would come of it. She too was a little disappointed: she had persuaded herself that the first sight or sound of her father's genius would have a magical effect, and procure for him an engagement at a large salary from the grateful manager on the

spot. Clear-sighted and sensible as she was on all ordinary, or indeed on extraordinary matters, in all things that concerned her father she was love-blinded. He was half inclined to be angry with her for damping the ardour of his expectations.

"It is very odd, Philippa," he said, testily, "but whenever you see one in good spirits, you always throw cold water over them."

"You don't mean that, papa," she answered, slightly hurt. "You know I always try to cheer you up. I love to see you in good spirits, but I don't like you to build them up on false expectations." She parted the grey hair from his forehead, and kissed him as she spoke.

"You are a good girl, Philippa—a very good girl," he said, half mollified by her caressing manner; "but you are too given to gloomy views. If I had thought you

would take matters so seriously, I don't think I should have taken you into my confidence so freely. Things are not so bad, after all."

"How could they very well be worse, papa dear?" replied Philippa, drawing her chair close to his, and laying her head upon his shoulder. There was a touch of comic gravity in her tones as she added, "We have eaten up nearly all the plate—next week we shall begin upon the chairs and tables." Mr. Maitland glanced ruefully round the comfortable room, as though he had "no stomach for the work." Then he answered, nervously—

"I don't see any necessity to dismantle the house entirely; people have tided over worse circumstances than ours. I think if we watch and wait awhile, we may manage to pull through."

"Of course we shall pull through," re-

joined Philippa; "but there must be no waiting, papa, or the tide may rise and swamp us. We must lay to our oars—I believe that is what the boatmen say—and work."

"How fond you are of talking about work," he answered, testily. "It is astonishing how matter-of-fact you have got lately. Work seems to be your favourite theme; I do believe you talk of it only to annoy me. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,' is a wise saying, but you seem to ignore it utterly." The tears came into Philippa's eyes; she felt keenly the unkindness of his testy words and manner. It was hard to be reproached for her anxiety for the credit and comfort of both their lives. He did not know how she tried to hide from his eyes all the unsightly signs of the trouble *he* had brought upon them: how she struggled to be



cheerful before him, and often called smiles to her lips when her heart was heavy— heavy for many causes. She could not make him feel their position exactly as she wished; he did not seem inclined to make any exertion to get out of the Slough of Despond in which they were half buried. A sort of Micawberish spirit seemed to be rising within him; he was inclined to wait for something to turn up, instead of stretching forth his hand and lifting up his eyes in search of it. The saying he had just quoted, “Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,” was constantly on his lips. Philippa had been so accustomed to be petted, caressed, and spoilt, that his vexed words wounded her. “But he does not mean it,” she thought, as she answered him—

“That may be a wise saying,” she said; “but ‘Never put off till to-morrow what may be done to-day,’ is a wiser.”

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“ But nothing need be done to-day,” he replied, glancing on her face to see the effect of his words. “ Both the day and the doing may be put a long way off. If I could only raise a few hundreds, Philippa, I see a way by which we could soon set ourselves straight.”

“ But we have nothing to raise it on,” said Philippa.

“ I mean to borrow it, child,” he answered.

“ Borrow it! with no chance of paying it back,” she exclaimed. “ Oh, papa! pray, pray don’t do that. We never shall get straight through such crooked means.”

“ Who told you I’d no chance of paying it?” he said. “ But I ought not to talk to you of these things, Philippa; you cannot understand them. Women always have narrow views on all money matters. They cannot conceive that the whole commercial world revolves upon the credit system.”

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"But we who don't belong to that system have no right to revolve with it," persisted the girl.

"It is too complicated and gigantic a piece of machinery for your small brain to comprehend," he said, desiring to drive the subject from her mind.

"Perhaps it is," said Philippa, "but I hear enough of its gigantic failures, and the gigantic ruin it brings to thousands; and I thank God, papa, that the trouble we have brought upon ourselves touches no home but ours."

"That is very true, child, very true," answered her father; "it is a great satisfaction to feel that—very; the better we do for ourselves, the better we do for other people; and, by the bye," he added, as though his thoughts branched off suddenly in a new direction, "when do you expect Mr. Brantynham here again?"

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"I never expect him, papa; he comes," she answered.

"Ay, and he comes pretty often, too," remarked her father, rubbing his hands together, and gazing into the fire with a satisfied air; "and you seem very glad to see him."

"I am always, and with good cause," she answered; "he has been a true friend to us in our trouble."

"Humph! so—so!" replied Mr. Maitland; "they say we never really try our friends till we try their pockets, and—and we have never tried him in that way."

"God forbid we ever should!" ejaculated Philippa, fervently.

"There's no reason for you to be so emphatic about the matter," said her father; "I believe Mr. Brantynham to be a rich man, and if he has a loose hundred or two, I don't see why he should not lend it to me."

I could pay it back with interest; and—and it would save me, and you too, from the beggary that is now staring us in the face.”

“Borrow money of Jasper Brantynham!” murmured Philippa almost under her breath, as though the idea frightened her.

“Why not?” answered Mr. Maitland. “What is the use of having a friend if you cannot make use of him?”

“Make use of him in an honest fashion, papa, but not in that way—oh! not in that way!” urged Philippa; “the money would go where so much has gone before, and never come back. You are unlucky, papa; it is no use disguising the fact; you have never been fortunate in your speculations.”

“Ay, but luck will change—it must; it can’t always be against a man.”

“Don’t try it, papa; never attempt it again, especially with another man’s money.

It is bad enough to speculate with your own, but it is a crime to speculate with another's. Promise me you will not; do promise that you will never speak to *him* on such a matter. I would rather work my fingers to the bone, or starve and die outright, than *you* should borrow money of *him*—of Jasper Brantynham."

She was pale and trembling from excitement; the bare idea of there being any monetary transactions between her father and Jasper Brantynham covered her with shame and humiliation; she could hardly tell why. She was a novice in the world's ways, and knew little of borrowing or of lending, but it would not have seemed to her half so terrible if her father had proposed to become the debtor of some other man.

Mr. Maitland could not help noticing her agitation.

“Why, child,” he said caressingly, “why, Philippa, what ails you? I had no idea you would take on so. I—I was half in jest. I won’t trouble Mr. Brantynham—there—there—will that content you? It was all for your sake—no matter what becomes of me. I don’t think of myself, but of you.”

Philippa was obliged to rest content with her father’s promise, though perhaps if she had undergone a strict self-examination, she would have been forced to acknowledge she did not place implicit faith in it, as she would have done a short time ago. He was strangely altered since that day when ruin first fell upon him. The change had been so gradual as to be almost imperceptible; it crept over him hour by hour, and showed itself in such small things, you could scarcely say when the change began or in what matter it most consisted, for it was in

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all things. The blow that had fallen on him seemed to have stunned the better part of his nature, and enfeebled the rest. He watched Philippa's doings with a jealous eye. When the household accounts came in, and she took out their scanty purse to pay, he cavilled at the paying; "let them wait," he said. She saw that thenceforth she must engage in a double struggle, not only to live honestly, but to keep his feet from straying in dangerous ways. She felt her youth had suddenly departed, she must leave it a long way behind her, and take up a woman's life, a woman's trouble, though she had only the years and experience of a girl to guide her; the way seemed dark, and the lights in the sky were few and troubled.

Perhaps there never was a young girl so unfortunately situated, and left so



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entirely to her own resources; her father evidently would be a frail support, a poor protector. Friends she had none, except in the worldly sense; her intercourse with these had been restricted to mere lip and eye courtesies, to pleasant phrases, bows, and smiles. Indeed, to what greater extent does common friendship generally go? It shares in your festivities, joins in your mirth, laughs at your jokes, beams on you during the days of good fortune, and when the evil comes it drives to your doors, leaves its card of condolence, and drives away again to lay its favours on some other shrine. Well, to a certain extent we all play the same game, and have no right to abuse its tactics when we in our turn have lost, and our friends know us no more. That there is a higher and nobler kind of friendship none will doubt, though it is enjoyed by the few. Philippa, how-





## CHAPTER V.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

**A** HUGE placard appeared in the windows of the gloomy old house at Knightsbridge, announcing "This House to Let." The greater part of the furniture had been removed and sold by auction, the rest Philippa retained; there was just about enough, she thought, to furnish such rooms as would be absolutely necessary for her father and herself. This breaking-up of the old home, and under such circumstances too, was a great grief to her, sometimes it seemed almost more than she could bear; though she gave her directions in a calm self-possessed manner, with tearless eyes

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and steadfast voice ; no one would have believed that her heart was nigh breaking. A funereal solemnity appeared to take possession of the place. There was no busy matron superintending the work, no active servants passing in and out hither and thither, fetching and carrying, though perhaps increasing instead of diminishing the confusion consequent upon a general move. Everything devolved upon that one lonely girl ; it seemed quite out of the common order of things that she should be there in all the bewildering noise, bustle, and confusion, friendless and companionless.

The men who were engaged in the task of removing appeared to have an instinctive sympathy for the forlorn young creature ; they put off their rough ways, and did their business in a quiet, orderly manner, showing in many kind, thoughtful acts a desire to spare her, as far as possible, all annoyance

and trouble, as though they knew her history—perhaps they did. It is astonishing how strangely the story of a household will sometimes creep out and reveal itself to the prying eyes of its neighbours ; no matter what pains the chief actors take to hide it, it will not be hidden. How many skeletons creep out bit by bit and rattle their bones in the face of a gaping world !

Philippa had dismissed the servants before the general rout began, and had only a help, a sort of charwoman in the house, who seemed to live, eat, drink, and sleep in her bonnet and pattens, for on no possible occasion was either extremity seen uncovered. She was not of much use to Philippa in reality, though she always appeared busy, and went rushing about the house in a state of chronic helplessness, being quick to get in everybody's way and slow to get out of it. Once, as she went clat-

tering through the empty rooms, Philippa ventured to suggest mildly that it would be as well if she would take her pattens off.

“I don’t like follerers, Miss,” was the answer, “and if I was to go barefoot in empty houses to oblige others I should soon have one as opodeldoc or hot irons wouldn’t drive away. In course it don’t matter to them as one serves whether one’s got the rheumatics or not—but I like the ’art that can feel for another.”

After administering this poetical rebuke Mrs. Gubbins retired to the lower regions, where she could go clattering about more at her ease; but out of sight was not to be out of mind in her case, for she seemed bent on making more noise than ever, and sent a hundred ringing echoes rumbling through the house. Whenever it was absolutely necessary she should communicate with Philippa she merely poked the edge of

her bonnet in at the open door, jerked out her message, and disappeared. Philippa's reply came wandering after her down the stairs.

Jasper Brantynham showed his thoughtful kindness and care for Philippa and her father in every possible way. There was so much tact and delicacy too in all he did, that he loaded them with graceful courtesies without allowing them to feel the weight of the obligation ; indeed he always tried to make it appear that *he* was the derson obliged, not they. At the present crisis of their affairs he had carried Mr. Maitland off to spend a week or ten days with him at Brighton. He fancied that her father's presence would impede and embarrass Philippa's movements, and so indeed they would have done ; his querulous complainings and vain regrets would have been a sore trial to her at this most trying

time. She hardly knew how to be thankful enough that she was spared the burthen of his loud uttered grief in addition to her own anxieties, which at times threatened to overwhelm her.

The last van had driven from the door, and left all the untidy litter and other signs of a removal both within and without the house. Philippa and Mrs. Gubbins were therefore in sole possession. Gloomy and desolate enough their possession seemed to be. In the dining-room Philippa had gathered together such articles of furniture as she deemed it best to keep. Out of the wreck of the old home she hoped to build up a new. Her position in the present and her prospects in the future were dreary enough; she felt that as she sat shivering over the fire in the deserted house. Now and then the sound of Mrs. Gubbins's cracked, unmusical voice, as she

droned through a Christmas carol in the back kitchen, travelled to Philippa's ear. Then she heard some passers pause at the doorstep, and exchange friendly greetings, while they wondered "whether a frost was going to set in," and "what sort of weather they would have on Christmas-day." Presently a carriage drove up to the next house, and there was such a chatter of young merry voices, such shouts of greeting and welcoming—the children had come home from school—that Philippa could not resist the temptation to get up and look from the window to catch a glimpse of the glad faces. She felt as though it would do her good; but it did not; it made her feel the aching void in her own life more than ever. She turned away, but she could not sit by the fireside again. She wandered through the empty rooms, and upstairs and downstairs, like a restless spirit. She had



twilight of a dull December filled the deserted house with shadows. Philippa went back to the dining-room, and resuming her seat, sat watching the fire. The flickering flames leaped up, flashed in her eyes, and lighted up her face with a warm, genial glow, as though if they had not been only tongues of flame they would speak and comfort her. She sat there silent and motionless as a statue, staring at the fire, full of fitful fancies, and strange, wandering thoughts, till she grew nervous and dared not turn her eyes away; some sort of secret fascination held them there with mesmeric power. As the dim shadows lurked in the dusky corners of the room, they seemed to take form and shape, and press upon her in the invisible heavy air. As the fire burnt hollow and fell together, the very clinking of the cinders startled her. A heavy weight gathered on her

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spirit; she was evidently suffering from a sort of waking-nightmare, if such a thing can be. She longed to scream, and throw it off. How slowly the time passed; the minutes seemed hours. Oh, if the woman would only make her appearance with the lights! but she would not. She never came unless she was summoned, and Philippa had not courage to rise and ring the bell.

Presently there was one loud, sharp rap at the door, which reverberated through the empty house, and made Philippa's heart leap and beat violently. She instinctively laid her hand upon it, lest it should burst its bounds. She started up, turned her eyes towards the door, and waited. Mrs. Gubbins soon showed signs of her existence, and came lumbering up the stairs, light in hand. She opened the street-door cautiously, and held a brief parley with some one on the steps.

“Bless the woman! can’t you give a straightfor’ard answer to a straightfor’ard question? I asked if any of this ’ere distressed family was in the house?” said a cheery woman’s voice, that sent warmth and comfort to Philippa’s heart. She sprang towards the door, exclaiming—

“Martha! dear Martha! here I am!”

At the sound of her voice, Martha, or Mrs. Titkins, as she should properly be called—a woman ruddy with health and good-nature, and gaily decorated with ribbons and flowers—thrust the grim Gubbins aside, rushed forward like a fresh, invigorating north-easter, swept Philippa back into the dining-room, and in another moment held her in her arms, and was hugging, crying, and laughing over her all at once.

“My darling precious pet! Miss Philippa dear! and to think of me knowin’

nothing about it till this blessed mornin' as ever was."

Philippa said nothing ; she could not speak, but she laid her head on her old nurse's shoulder and cried quietly. How she had longed for such a moment as this! —longed for some friendly woman's voice to comfort her—some friendly heart to feel with and for her—she had so thirsted for sympathy. It had come now—come at such a time, and in such an unexpected welcome form. The sudden revulsion of feeling it brought with it was almost too much for her. After a few minutes' indulgence of her great joy, she lifted her humid eyes to her visitor's face, and, twining her arms round her neck, said—

"Oh, nurse, I am so grateful to you for coming! God must have seen my need of a friend, and sent you."

"Dear heart!" she answered, returning

Philippa's caress with interest, "and why didn't you send for me?"

"How could I, Martha? You forget," answered Philippa, a pained look coming into her face.

"No, indeed, I don't," replied Mrs. Titkins, "and havin' feelin's, naturally, I was wounded through parties as shall be nameless being onsulting. It wasn't pleasant to be called a 'hinterfering toad,' when it was all for your good, dear! But there—never mind that now. As soon as ever I heerd things was going contrariwise here, 'Martha Titkins,' I said, 'put your feelin's in your pocket—it's big enough to hold 'em, surely—and go and see as that precious lamb ain't ill-used.' You knowed as whenever I was wanted, I'd be here, Miss Philippa, though some parties mayn't care to see old Matty's face again."

"How did you hear—how did you know about us?" inquired Philippa.

“ Oh, we heerd through our lad, as is own nevyer to your laundress’s man’s wife,” answered Mrs. Titkins; “ and Ezekiel, that’s my owner, he wanted to come off at once, and see what we could do. ‘ There’s the wan,’ he said, ‘ with furniture removed in town or country painted with a beautiful picture outside, such as nobody need be ashamed on. Orfer the wan,’ he said; ‘ it might be useful. He’s out there, dear ’ (she jerked her head towards the door), “ come to see if he can be useful too.”

“ Ask him in, pray ask him in !” exclaimed Philippa.

Mrs. Titkins went to the door, and ushering in her lord, or rather pulling him in by the arm, said, indicating Philippa, “ There, that’s my young lady as you’ve heerd so much on, and you’ve got the chance of seeing her at last.”

Mr. Titkins, a tall, raw-boned man with a heavy thatch of red hair and a very wide

mouth, did not seem inclined to avail himself of the chance; for he twirled his hat in his hand, and looked everywhere, except at Philippa's self. She went forward, spoke to him, thanked him for coming, and offered to shake hands with him. He leisurely proceeded to wipe his own huge fist upon the leg of his trousers, then looking with a side glance upon her small outstretched hand, he took it for a second in his horny palm, then dropped it, as though it had been a hot coal and burnt him. Rolling his head towards his wife, and winking sagaciously with both eyes at once, he said briefly and slowly—

“The right sort!”

“Exactly!” replied Mrs. Titkins, adding in a half-whisper to Philippa, “Ezekiel don't say much, but he's a wise man in the main, and what he do say is mostly to the point.” As though in illustration of his

wife's commendatory remark, Mr. Titkins turned his eyes round the room, and said, "Anything to heave off?" As he spoke, he laid violent hands on such articles of furniture as stood nearest to him, and proceeded to pack up with the air of a man who has an eye to business, and no idea of being stopped on the way.

Philippa quietly arrested his operations by informing him that the work of removal was completed, and the few things which remained there were to furnish a new home for herself and her father.

"But do sit down," she added; "I can't bear to see you stand, and I have so much to say to Martha."

Mr. Titkins forthwith took out his blue speckled handkerchief, spread it over the chair, and sat down at the edge.

"You do seem in a rough, unsettled state, Miss Philippa dear," resumed Martha, "and



not a decent body in the house, as one may say; for I don't look upon that pepper-castor as answered us in the light of a human bein', and I dare say she's all the help you've got."

Philippa admitted that she was, adding, "But it is only for a short time, nurse, and we get on very well. In three days we must leave here altogether."

"And where are you going to, my poor, precious child?" inquired Martha, giving her another sympathetic hug.

"Well," replied Philippa, with slight hesitation, "I—I am not quite certain; but I dare say I shall soon find a place somewhere." A bright idea seemed to strike her as, looking up in Martha's face, she added, "Perhaps you can help me, nurse?"

At this simple suggestion, Martha began to chuckle quietly, and poked her husband with her umbrella. He bore the attack

meekly, his features relaxed into a broad grin, which reached from ear to ear, till the upper part of his head seemed in danger of falling off; then he rolled himself from side to side, winking violently in return, as though between them they were enjoying the greatest joke imaginable. Amazed at this incomprehensible behaviour, Philippa looked from one to the other. When Mrs. Titkins had partially recovered her equanimity, she answered—

“That’s exactly what we said, Ezekiel and me. ‘She’ll never know what to do or where to go, Miss Philippa wont,’ I says—‘she knows no more of the world than a new-born baby.’”

“‘New-born baby,’ that’s wot she said,” repeated her husband, nodding his head approvingly.

“And lodgin’s is lodgin’s, and folks soon find the bottom of their pockets, ’specially

when they ain't wery deep ones; and I says —leastways 'Zekiel hinted——” She jerked her head towards him for him to take up the cue and go on, but he didn't seem to see it; he was engaged watching a lazy moth that was fluttering about the ceiling. Seeing she should get no help from him, Martha continued—“The fact is, dear, that's why he come with me, through fearing as you wouldn't take my word as you'd be welcome. Well, this is just how it is—we've gone into the greengrocery line.”

“Coals and potatoes likewise,” added Ezekiel, fearing those important items might be forgotten.

“Nothing vulgar in the shape of sacks and baskets outside, but beautiful oranges, rosy apples, and all sorts of foreign fruits piled up in the windows, with a private door round the corner, and a beautiful oilcloth as a duchess might be proud to walk on.

Our upper part's let to most genteel parties, but jest at this minute it happens our second floor's wacant."

"Through parties a boltin'," interrupted Mr. Titkins, keeping cause and effect in view.

"And I thought it might do for you and your pa, Miss Philippa, as a conveniency for a time, for fault of a better, jest till you can turn round; and I shall be always there, dear," she added, smoothing Philippa's hand caressingly as she was speaking, "to see as you ain't imposed on, and have things like a born lady, as you are, though ever so poor. 'Zekiel, you can take away the wan. I shall stay here all night, and when I *do* come back, I shall bring my precious one with me."

She hustled Ezekiel out of the room, and held a whispered conference with him in the passage. She waited till the van

drove off, and then returned to the parlour, threw off her bonnet and shawl, and proceeded to make herself at home.

Under her fresh breezy influence Philippa soon became another creature, or rather some portion of her old self came back to her. Her nerves, which had been wrought up to the highest pitch, relaxed now, and were soothed and comforted by Martha's voice, while Martha's presence in the lonely house brought life and sunshine with it. Things did not look so black to Philippa's eyes now that she had a friend with whom she could talk over old affairs and discuss new.

Mrs. Titkins did not let the grass grow under her feet; in spite of all attempts to detain her she tore herself away from Philippa's side, and busied herself about the house, exploring it from cellar to garret, making a mortal enemy of Mrs. Gubbins

by her inquisitiveness; she would know the why and the wherefore of everything, and cross-examined her on many minor matters which had escaped, or rather had never entered into Philippa's mind. She went pattering about the lower regions, where Mrs. Gubbins had kept undisturbed possession. In her care for her "dear Miss Philippa's" interest, her dread lest she should be imposed upon, and her suspicion of the charwoman's integrity, she peered into everything that was large enough to contain a shrimp. As she was about to carry her investigation into a small collection of grimy pots and pans, Mrs. Gubbins snarled out—

"You can let them alone; them's mine, and there's nothin' in 'em."

"Oh, indeed!" replied the irrepressible Martha; "then if there's nothin' in 'em, it can't be any harm my lookin'."

“You’ll burn yourself,” exclaimed Mrs. Gubbins, laying an arresting hand upon her; “that ’un’s full of hot pea-soup, jest off the fire.”

“I didn’t know as you made pea-soup of Miss Philippa’s stockings and pocket-handkerchers,” exclaimed Martha, triumphantly, disclosing those articles to view. Prosecuting her search still further, she opened and emptied the copper-hole, adding, “Nor yet as you lighted the copper fire with the master’s boots and embroidered weskit; yah! ain’t you ashamed of yourself, you old wampire, preying upon them as is heaped with sorrers? Why, you’ve got no more ’art than a lamp-post!”

Mrs. Gubbins, however, was not to be put to shame in this matter-of-fact way, though the proofs of her dishonesty were flourished before her eyes. She never even blinked, but cast them up piously, and in

the face of this glaring evidence declared herself the victim of a base conspiracy. She took up the corner of her apron and rubbed her eyes into a state of watery inflammation as she answered the indignant Martha.

“It’s them wicious carmen as have been moving the furnitur’; they’ve potted them goods to ruin my character, because I wouldn’t see the young lady robbed, and let ’em swim in bitter beer, which they’ve drunk gallons as it is; but I’ll step up and speak to her, she wont see a fellow creetur’ as is a poor hardworkin’ widdered charwoman, suspected wrongful.”

“You’ll jest stay where you are,” exclaimed Mrs. Titkins, barring the way; “I wont have Miss Philippa worrited with the likes of you. I shall get her away to-morrow and clear out everything as belongs to her; then if you can’t keep your hands



from pickin' and stealin' you can make free with the gas-pipes and fire-grates; you'll soon fall into the hands of the law, as wont let you off as easy as I do. But, I say, don't think you've gammoned Martha Titkins with that cock-and-bull story of the carmen, which is all contrairy and agin' all common sinse."

Mrs. Titkins gathered together the secreted property, and with a withering look upon the pious culprit turned upon her heel and walked upstairs. Mrs. Gubbins grew almost green with rage, shook her fist after the retreating figure, and said, in a hoarse whisper—

"If I ain't rewenged upon you my name ain't Margaret Gubbins."





## CHAPTER VI.

### MR. MAITLAND COMES HOME.

**W**ITHIN a week of Martha's first appearance at Knightsbridge, Philippa found herself settled in the home which her old nurse with such thoughtful kindness had proposed to her. The neighbourhood was not exactly such as she herself would have chosen; but then, with a limited purse, people seldom have much choice; although it was not all she could have desired, it was better than she had expected.

The shop was in Great Marylebone Street, the private door, which, in Martha's eyes gave the stamp of gentility to the

house, was in Welbeck Street. The rooms which she and her father were to occupy were light and airy. Philippa superintended the arrangement of the furniture, and placed the several articles as nearly as possible as they had stood in the old house, so that things might not seem altogether strange in her father's eyes when he should first come to the new home. Everything in his bedroom was arranged precisely as in his former room. In their only sitting-room, the warmest, cosiest nook was devoted to his especial service—indeed it may as well be said at once that everything was devoted to him. He was the one person to be thought of, to be cared for; of herself, Philippa never thought at all. Her one great anxiety was to satisfy *him*, that he might not feel the change too much; and soon, under her careful management, that small suite of apartments bore some resemblance to the

old home. Somehow she began to dread his complaints, to fear his murmurings, not knowing whither they might lead him. She had, however, kept him well informed of all her movements, intentions, and desires; he had given a gracious consent for her to adopt Martha's kind suggestion, that they should take up their abode with her, "just for a time till something should turn up;" he underlined the words.

The day had come, and the hour was fast approaching when Mr. Maitland's arrival was expected. Philippa was in a state of nervous trepidation; she wandered from one small room to the other, taking a "last look round" to see that all was right, that no improvement could be made, no finishing touches were required in her arrangements. She felt tolerably well satisfied with her inspection—and with some cause too.

Hitherto this setting in order of home,

had been the work of other people ; now it was done by her own hands, and, as she had been deeply interested in the work, she was pleased with the result. The simplicity and good taste she had displayed in the disposition of the most trifling things gave an air of comfort to the room, if not of elegance, which would have contrasted favourably with many an elaborately furnished drawing-room, overcrowded with buhl, marqueterie, massive ornaments, and expensive nick-nacks which are arranged without taste or harmony, and consequently have no charm for the eye, no gratification for the senses, but merely bear witness to the wealth and vulgar mind of the owner.

Philippa had retained nothing of any value, except her piano, one of Erard's, and as a matter of course her father's violin ; she had parted with every ornament that

would fetch a pound, but with the few insignificant trifles she had preserved, she managed to give that humble home a graceful appearance that would have become a better state.

Her heart beat and her cheeks were all aglow with expectancy as the cab drove up to the door. "Was her father alone?" she wondered, "or was *he* with him?"—that *he*, compared with whom all the world of men were nothing—inasmuch as, that in great, good, and noble things Jasper Brantynham surpassed them all. She listened; yes, there were two persons ascending the stairs. She heard their steps and she knew their voices; one was her father's, the other the full, rich-toned voice of Jasper Brantynham. She felt the hot blood rush to her face like a crimson tide that was slow to ebb back to her heart again. She put up her hands to

hide it as though she was ashamed to let her joy be seen. What right had she to rejoice when her father was coming, mounting the stairs slowly to face his changed life, his changed home; and to realize for the first time to the fullest extent his reduced circumstances?

Martha came into the room carrying his small portmanteau; she was immediately followed by Mr. Maitland and Jasper Brantynham.

“Dear papa! I’m so glad to see your face again! I’ve been so lonely without you!” exclaimed Philippa, as she flew into his arms and embraced him heartily.

“There, there, that will do, my child”! he answered, returning her caress with decorous but less demonstrative affection. “I’m quite out of breath. I—I thought we were going out on the roof. What on

earth made you take a place so high up? We might as well roost upon the chimney-pots."

Philippa's heart sank in her breast, and the flush faded from her cheek. She had tried hard to make things look bright and pleasant to him, and she was a little disappointed that he had not the appreciative genius to recognise her efforts and repay her with some loving praise; but she covered her momentary disappointment with a hazy consolation—"How can he tell what I have done?" she thought. "Only a change, a sad change strikes him; he sees nothing else, and I dare say the rooms do look small and shabby to him," and she glanced round with a shade of dissatisfaction herself. By such slight things are our feelings shaken, and in such strange ways will one mind unconsciously influence another.

"It is a long way up, papa," she said,



half apologetically, "but you'll get used to it in time."

"Ay, ay, in time one may get used to blazes," replied Mr. Maitland; but noticing a cloud on Philippa's brow, and perhaps feeling that he was not so gracious as he should be, he added quickly, "but I don't know what I should do without you, dear child. I am sure you have done your best; you are the one great blessing of my life." He stooped and kissed her. Philippa at this show of affection brightened up.

"Dear papa," she said, "I hope your blessing will be always at your side. I am so glad to bid you welcome home."

"The welcome is very pleasant, my child," he answered; "but the welcome 'home' is a very different matter. What do you say, Mr. Brantynham?" Philippa had already shaken hands with Jasper, and they had recognised one another's

presence by mute but eloquent glances, though they had not spoken a word. He spoke now, and his looks and words seemed addressed to her—

“I should say that such a welcome would repay a man for crossing the wide Atlantic, and a home like this, with such a tenant, makes a fellow like me look with grim discontent upon his bachelor’s quarters.”

“I’m afraid you mean a compliment,” rejoined Philippa, smiling and blushing at the same time, “but I forgive you, for I know your motive is kind.”

“I never pay compliments, Miss Maitland,” replied Jasper, stoutly, “especially to *you*, for you shy and scold if I venture even upon the mildest.”

“I don’t think I should have courage to scold you now, even on the politest provocation,” she said, looking up in her father’s face and smoothing his hand

affectionately, "you have taken such care of papa."

"Indeed he has," rejoined Mr. Maitland; "we have had a very pleasant time, Philippa. Brighton is a capital place, especially with such a host as Jasper Brantynham."

"I am sure he has been all that is good and kind," said Philippa, lifting her grateful eyes to Jasper's face, which made him long to play the host again, that he might win such another glance. "You have shared Mr. Brantynham's hospitality for a long time, papa; now we must try and tempt him to share ours. You'll stay and have some tea?" she added, addressing Jasper.

"It is a temptation," he answered, "but it is one I must withstand. I have received a hasty note summoning me home. My father is reported to be seriously ill."

"I am sorry for that," said Philippa, softly. She could not help a shade of dis-

hand in his, and letting his eyes rest for a moment on her face with a keen searching glance; "though I am afraid it is no use to say 'Take care of *yourself*;' you want to be taken care of—you are looking sadly worn and pale." She had been pale a moment back, but as he was speaking her face flushed crimson. "You have been exerting yourself too much, and are suffering for it."

"My exertions are over now; I shall rest," she said.

"I hope you will," he answered; "but I must indeed go now. You will not forget me, even if I never come back?"

"No," she replied, and their two hands tightened together. "I could not forget so true a friend; and I would not if I could."

"Good-bye!" he said, with a long lingering pressure, as their hands slowly unclasped.

“Good-bye!” she said; and that was all. A white mist floated before her eyes and blotted out everything from her sight except *his* face; *that* seemed to have left its impression in the air, to smile upon her still, though she knew he was no longer there. She heard his footsteps on the rough stairs descending slowly and heavily, as though some thoughts lingered behind and he would fain have lingered with them. Once or twice he hesitated: was he coming back? No, he went on again. She heard the door close after him, and it seemed to shut out light from her eyes and hope from her heart. He was gone. Would they ever meet again? And when, and where? She had said “Good-bye!” so coldly. Oh! if she could only call him back, see him stand there as he had stood a moment since, she would then take leave of him in a more friendly, grateful way; not with that

mere coldly-uttered "Good-bye!" Her heart was brimming over with gratitude; yet only those common words rose to her lips. She had seemed thankless, as though she had no soul to feel, no power to appreciate his thoughtful care. What would he think of her, what memory had she given him to carry away? Where had he gone? "Home," he had said; but where was his home? She knew nothing of his whereabouts, nothing of his family, little of himself except that he was Jasper Brantynham, and knowing that she had known enough. But she was fast awaking to another knowledge now. She felt, if it were so decreed that they were never to meet again, that the life she must live would be a blank. She would have no courage to go on with it, but would rather turn her face to the wall and grope her way through the dulness of life to the darkness of death, and go to her grave and rest there.

She was still standing on the spot where he had left her, so lost in thought, so absorbed in feeling, that she had forgotten her father, forgotten herself—everything but the fact that Jasper had gone—when she was called back to the commonplace world by her father's seizing the poker and stirring the fire vigorously, as he muttered half aloud—

“What a confounded fool I have been, to have dodged and doubled in the face of fortune so often, and to be run to earth at last, driven into such a den as this! Child, could you find no better place than this sky-parlour to call me home to? It was all very well for you to talk of honesty, right, and all that, but I was a fool to heed you. But this sort of thing wont last long, if you'll listen to reason. Look here, Philippa——”

“Oh, not to-night, papa, not to-night!” she exclaimed, shivering as though an east

wind had suddenly bitten her to the bone. "I—I think I am ill." She tottered forward; he had just time to catch her in his arms, and found that exertion and excitement had overcome her at last. She had fainted.







## CHAPTER VII.

### BRANTYNHAM HALL AND ITS INMATES.

**T**HE express train whirls home Jasper Brantynham ; it shrieks and thunders and hisses as it flies along, hurling time behind it with every turn of its huge wheels, as though it never meant to be overtaken, but would hurry on and on through quiet country towns and wide outlying valleys and swelling hills, until it should hurl itself and its living freight into eternity.

To Jasper Brantynham the feeling of being carried along with this wondrous speed was a pleasant one. He was alone in the carriage, and he proceeded to make

himself as comfortable as circumstances would allow: he wrapped his railway rug cosily round him, lighted his cigar, and puffed away slowly and deliberately like an experienced smoker as he was; then, leaning back in his seat, he closed his eyes dreamily, and sent his thoughts backwards and forwards between poor Philippa's lonely lodgings and his own luxurious home, which he was fast approaching.

Perhaps it would be as well to hurry on before him and get a glimpse of Jasper's home; not of the home which men centuries dead had built up of stone and granite, but of that home which hearts and hands made for him. To understand fully how that home had become to him what it was now, and what it had been for years past, it is necessary to break, for a page or two, the chief thread of our story and take a retrospective glance at the affairs past and present of Brantynham Hall.

Jasper's mother died during his early childhood, though he had still a dim shadowy memory of a young girlish creature who loved and petted and played with him; then came a brief blank and he missed his playmate. He remembered being carried into a darkened room and being laid in a fair woman's arms, who cried and grieved over him, because she was going somewhere and must leave him behind. He had wondered in his childish mind what it all meant then, but he knew afterwards. The death of his young wife was a terrible blow to his father; he never recovered from it. People who had known him long and well said that from the time the grave closed over her he was a changed man. His mind received a shock and had been thrown all out of gear, and had never quite regained its equilibrium, but was ever after jarred and out of tune. He gradually grew to be eccentric in his manners, and got angry and

excited at the slightest provocation. The old warm genial nature was soured and the fiery spirit of the Brantynhams seemed to be extinguished, or revealed itself only in fitful flashes of ungovernable temper which it was hard for those about him to bear.

He mixed very little with his neighbours, and when he visited them it was only by fits and starts. The only family with whom he kept up an unbroken familiar intercourse was that of his lawyer, Mr. Atherton, who was his most frequent visitor. Either he himself or his wife and children were constant guests at Brantynham Hall. Mrs. Atherton, when she was there, overwhelmed the little Jasper with motherly attentions, and her two children, Kate and Joseph, were his chief playmates when he was at home from school during the holidays. With little Kate, who was three or four years

At church, while Joseph attended devoutly to the service and uttered the responses with as much regularity as the clerk himself, Jasper would perhaps be occupied in caricaturing the preacher, as a kind of marginal note in his church service. Joseph, in pious horror, would call attention to the fact, and Jasper would call him a sneak and threaten to "punch his head" on the first opportunity, which threat he invariably carried out. Joseph took the punishment meekly, and further aggravated his assailant by insisting on shaking hands and forgiving him on the spot. This magnanimous conduct was never appreciated, but rather resented by the indignant Jasper.


"I shan't shake hands," he would roar out, "and I don't want to be friends. If you'd only stand up and fight it out, hit back and pound away at me as hard as you

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like, it would be all right; but I wont be friends with a dirty sneak who takes a licking like a mangy cur. Joe, I hate you!"

But Joseph would persecute him with his forgiveness nevertheless, and that, not being a thing which could be bodily flung aside, Jasper was obliged to carry away with him, though the coals of fire never singed a hair of his head, but rather added a flame to his spirit.

So time passed on. When Jasper was about fifteen Mr. Atherton died, and the young heir of Brantynham hoped there would be an end of the detested Joe; but his hopes were disappointed. The lawyer's widow took possession of a pleasant retreat on the Brantynham estate, and her children were at the Hall almost as much as ever. The young gentleman had wriggled himself into Mr. Brantynham's good graces, being always



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quiet, deferential, and obedient; in fact, by always seeming to be everything that a natural boy is not. He flattered the old man in a thousand silent, nameless ways, till he wormed himself into his heart. People often wondered how young Ather-ton had contrived to be such a favourite at Brantynham Hall, but they could not tell. They might as well have tried to discover the way the east wind creeps into one's marrow, whether through the roots of one's hair, the tips of one's fingers, or through which particular pores of the skin it makes its subtle way; it makes us feel that it is there, though how it comes or whither it goes is still a mystery, and will remain so until eternity.

One day when Jasper was about seventeen he came home from Eton, bringing a brother Etonian to spend the holidays with him. To his disgust and amazement he found Kate and Joseph fairly domiciled at the

Hall. Mrs. Atherton no longer existed: Jasper was introduced to that lady under another title—that of Mrs. Brantynham, the mistress of the Hall, and his father's second wife. Mrs. Atherton had played her cards well, and won the trick by finesse without honours. She had always prided herself upon being a managing woman, but that was the proudest moment of her life when she managed Mr. Brantynham into the village church and came out the mistress of his household. If she had had her will she would have managed the heir out of his home too; but she saw she must be careful how she interfered with Jasper, for though his father's affection for him had been materially undermined, the pride of name and race was strong as ever, and she knew if any open rupture were allowed to take place she and her children would go to the wall.

Jasper never got over the repugnance



which seized him when the marriage was so abruptly announced to him. Young as he was he felt that his father had been shamefully entrapped into a marriage which was every way unsuitable and beneath him. Mrs. Brantynham, as she must henceforth be treated, was certainly a grand-looking woman, with what is called a fine figure, large marked features, a high colour, a loud voice; indeed there was a loudness in her dress as well as in her tone and manners that bordered on vulgarity and was most revolting to Jasper's feelings. At one time it did not signify to him what Mrs. Atherton was like, but when she became Mrs. Brantynham, the woman who would flaunt his father's name in the world, it was quite a different matter. He knew that his father's life had been a lonely and blighted one, but he also knew that *she* was not the kind of woman to bring "balm to

the hurt mind," or stir into his life a new and invigorating influence for the present or hold in store any comfort for his declining years. How had she managed to get possession of his father's name, purse, and person, legal possession too, that was the question which puzzled Jasper mightily. If it had been possible in these days to denounce a woman for witchcraft he would have been strongly inclined to do it, so inexplicable did the matter seem to him. He wondered again and again how things had been brought to such an issue; but it was no use pondering on the subject, what was done was done beyond recall. Mrs. Atherton had become Mrs. Brantynham, his stepmother, and must be treated with that respect which was due to his father's wife; and under the circumstances he resolved to do the wisest thing, to try to bear pleasantly the infliction of her presence

at Brantynham Hall. He did so as far as she was concerned, and continued to jerk out some confused congratulations to her and also to his father; but his wrath was greatly excited by the triumphant snigger on Joseph's face as he snivelled out his pleasure at being able to call "dear Jasper" Brother.

As time rolled on Jasper's great indignation subsided into settled disgust. "Home" was no longer home to him, and he spent as little time as possible at Brantynham Hall. Animated by simple filial respect and duty he paid periodical visits to his father; if they had been shortened according to his inclination they would have been brief indeed. His rooted dislike to Joseph Atherton deepened instead of decreasing. Kate was well enough, but he would have liked her better if she had been the child of some other mother.

Things were in this state when he received

the telegram informing him of his father's illness, and desiring his immediate presence. He arrived at Highton, the nearest station for Brantynham, though that was seven miles from the Hall, early in the morning. It was very cold and raw; the air was filled with misty rain, so fine as to be felt rather than seen. He found the dog-cart waiting for him at the station. He sprang into it without a word, and, after arranging the waterproof wraps about him, he took the reins from the groom, saying, "I think I should have preferred a covered conveyance of some kind on such a morning as this, Reynolds."

"Yes, sir," answered Reynolds, touching his hat, respectfully.

"Then why did you not bring me one?" said Jasper, with some signs of impatience; "I suppose the stables are not yet reduced to a dog-cart and cob."

"No, sir; but Mrs. Brantynham ordered the dog-cart last night," replied Reynolds.

"Last night was fine, starry, and clear; this morning is wet and gloomy," said Jasper. "If Mrs. Brantynham had given her orders this morning she would have sent a different vehicle to that. I think you might have changed it on your own responsibility."

"I dursn't have done it, sir," replied Reynolds; "none on us dursn't disobey the mistress. She don't allow tampering with her orders; when she says a thing she likes to have it done. Why, sir, if Mrs. Brantynham was to tell us to cut off her head, I'm sure she'd make us do it, though we know it's against the law."

Jasper could not help smiling at this serious assertion, and from the bottom of his heart he wished his stepmother could be induced to give such an order, and find

servants faithful enough to execute it; but he said, in answer to the groom—

“There are times, Reynolds, when obedience is a great virtue, though it may involve some sacrifice of principles.”

“Yes, sir,” answered Reynolds, finding it difficult to make any other reply.

“How long has my father been ailing?” inquired Jasper, after a slight pause.

“He’s not been ailing at all,” replied the man; “but he was took ill two or three days ago, though not dangerously so, sir, till yesterday, when Dr. Latham said you’d better be telegraphed for.”

They drove on through the long muddy lanes, the barren land, gaunt hedges, and leafless trees spreading before him a wide dreary panoramic prospect which it was no pleasure to look upon. They passed through silent villages, where no signs of life were yet astir. The dull rain gathered on the

overhanging eaves and pattered to the ground with melancholy precision. It was a lonely, miserable drive, and Jasper's spirit as well as his body seemed seized with a shivering fit. Presently the old quaint gables of Brantynham Hall came in sight.

"Don't drive up to the house," said Jasper; "the sound of the rattling wheels may disturb my father. I'll get out at the stables and go my own way."

Accordingly he did go his own way; he went round the house, through the shrubbery, and entered by a side garden entrance, which was rarely used except in summer. He did not want to be waylaid by his step-mother or either of her children, and therefore avoided that part of the house where he would be likely to encounter them. He reached his father's dressing-room unobserved by any member of the household. There he found Dr. Latham,

the old family friend and medical adviser. The Doctor held up his finger as though to impose silence, and then came forward with noiseless steps to greet him.

“I am glad you are come, Mr. Jasper,” he said, in a low voice, “and I am glad to have good news to give you; I have been very anxious about your father, but last night about twelve o’clock more favourable symptoms set in. He is sleeping now, and if he wakes up calm and refreshed, as I trust he will, I shall have most sanguine hopes of his ultimate recovery.”

“Thank God for that!” ejaculated Jasper. “Your telegram only reached me yesterday afternoon. I was at Brighton; it was forwarded to me there, and I came down as soon as I possibly could.”

“I apprehended immediate danger when I sent it,” rejoined the Doctor. “Mrs. Brantynham, I believe, thought my anxiety



unnecessary, but I judged it right that you should be here; your coming at least could do no harm."

"I shall be eternally grateful to you for sending for me," replied Jasper, heartily. "I know I am away from Brantynham more than it is either right or wise to be, but somehow I can never make up my mind to stay here long. Has my father asked for me at all?"

"I don't know," replied Dr. Latham; "he has scarcely been conscious for a moment during any of my visits. This is the first entire night I have stayed with him. Miss Atherton has been his chief attendant, and I must say she makes a most indefatigable and tender nurse."

"She is a good little thing," replied Jasper, "when she is left to herself; but unfortunately she has the vices as well as the virtues of what is called an 'amiable

character,' and is too easily influenced by other people. I am glad she has been a comfort to my father," he added, gazing thoughtfully into the fire.

"Mrs. Brantynham has been properly anxious to take her place in the sick-room," rejoined Dr. Latham; "but that perpetual restlessness which possesses her keeps up a constant agitation, and seems to disturb your father. He is much better with Miss Atherton."

"Yes, much better!" said Jasper, dreamily.

"Of course, if his illness is likely to be a long, tedious one, which at present I can hardly judge, he must have a hired nurse."

Although they were conversing in undertones in Mr. Brantynham's dressing-room, yet the door leading into his bedroom was wide open, and allowed them a full view of the bed whereon he lay. As they

were speaking he moved, and muttered something uneasily in his sleep. In a moment Jasper and the Doctor both were beside him. Dr. Latham took the thin hand that lay upon the coverlet; it was moist and cool; he looked for a moment on his patient's face, then he gave a satisfied professional nod to Jasper, and whispered—

“He'll do now.”

Presently, as they still sat watching over him, he opened his eyes, and in a faint voice asked for water. In obedience to a sign from the Doctor, Jasper held a glass of cooling drink to his lips. He lifted his eyes languidly till they rested on his son's face, he recognised him, called him by name, seemed eager to talk to him, and a few broken sentences broke from his lips; but the Doctor interfered and forbade his speaking, and suggested that Jasper had better leave the room, as the mere fact of his presence might have an exciting in-

she sometimes overwhelmed him, as she did now. Not content with verbal welcoming she gave him an explosive peck upon his cheek, which he received with decorous respect; for however inclined he might have been to repel the attack, a gentleman cannot in common courtesy refuse a lady's embrace, even though she be an unpopular stepmother.

Mrs. Brantynham paid but a hasty visit to the sick man, for Jasper had hardly entered the breakfast-parlour when she joined him, and gave him a full, true, and particular account of his father's seizure, and her own scarcely quelled agonized feelings on the occasion. She wound up by saying, with slight reproach and deep regret—

“You wont mind what I am going to say, Jasper, but I am sure your father feels more and more every day your long and frequent absences from Brantynham.” She laid a velvet claw upon him, and

fluence on his father, who ought to be kept in perfect quiet.

“I don’t want you in the room,” the Doctor said ; “I am quite satisfied to have you in the house.”

On the staircase leading to the sick chamber Jasper encountered Mrs. Brantynham going to make inquiries, and pay her customary morning visit to her husband before she descended to the breakfast-room. She greeted him with open arms, indeed she was always uncomfortably cordial in her manner to him ; he would much rather she had been the reverse, for he could not reciprocate her cordiality, nor even seem to do so. That *seeming* process is very easy to some people, but it was not so to him. He was always coldly polite to her, and nothing more. But she never heeded his frigidity. Let him be as icy as he pleased, she seemed determined that he should not freeze the warm gush of feelings with which

Brantynham. "No; you are not wanted to 'step in and square accounts.' My son performs those duties in your father's home and on his estate which *you* have neglected. He tries hard to fill your place."

"I know he does," replied Jasper, with heightened colour, "as you tried hard to fill my mother's. And do you think I owe him thanks for that?"

"Yes, if you were willing to pay an honest debt, I think you do," she answered. "He is a good steward, and looks after your father's estate as no hired servant would do. You are the heir, and will reap the benefit of his work."

"Do you mean to say that Joseph Ather-ton stays at Brantynham for my benefit?" inquired Jasper, speaking slowly and briefly, as though he wanted as brief an answer, "Yes" or "No."

"For your father's comfort now; for your

added, with as much plausible affection as she could force into her voice, "Why can't you stay and make your home with us? We are all so fond of you, Jasper, though I *know* sometimes you doubt it, and we would do anything in the world to make you happy. It might be a sacrifice to stay with us; but for your father's sake, for his satisfaction and happiness——"

"My dear Mrs. Brantynham," said Jasper, interrupting her, and removing her hand from his arm, "I thought when my father married you and adopted your children he had secured all that sort of thing, and might draw unlimited cheques on the bank of happiness, and you could honour them all. You don't mean to say there is a bankruptcy in the matrimonial company, and that I am wanted to step in and wind up accounts?"

"You have a detestable habit of turning serious things into ridicule," said Mrs.

both, for she acted as an effectual check upon all conversation of a private nature between them; they were always more or less restrained when she was by. There were many things they had to say to one another touching on family affairs, the management of the property and estate, and Jasper's doings in town, with none of which matters had Mrs. Brantynham any concern. Sometimes, when her husband was able to be up sitting in his easy-chair, and wheeled into another room, he and Jasper would chat together, drifting gradually to matters which interested them both, and which it was necessary should be discussed between them. This Mrs. Brantynham did not like, and would frequently make her appearance, work in hand.

"Pray go on talking," she used to say, perceiving plainly enough that her coming put an effectual stop to their "going on;"



“don’t mind me; I shall sit here quietly working, and be no interruption to you, at least I hope not; unless indeed you have any private confidences which I am not worthy of sharing.”

Of course when this was said with a smiling face and decidedly emphatic accent, which shows a spirit ready to be wounded on the slightest provocation, there was nothing to be done but to make a declaration that her company was most welcome, indeed the most desirable thing to be enjoyed under existing circumstances. Nobody likes to be accused of having “private confidences.”

But after all, when the momentary irritation was over, Jasper did not very much care for Mrs. Brantynham; Joe was his pet aversion. If he could only steer clear from him he was satisfied; the less he saw of him during the day the better pleased he was when the night came. He did not want to

quarrel with him, and yet, somehow, whenever they met some disagreement was sure to arise. Joseph Atherton acted as a perpetual blister on Jasper's spirit, and all the dressing and good counsel which prudence gave him failed to allay the irritation.

One bright March day the sun shone out warm and genial, full of promise that the spring would be coming soon, nay, was already on its way, unless the wild northeaster should stop its progress, and bite with its sharp nipping breath the tender buds and blossoms that aid and herald its coming. The winter had been so long and dreary that Mr. Brantynham looked out upon the sunshine with longing eyes, and yearned to bask in its beams again. He thought he was well enough to be wheeled up and down the terrace, and suggested as much to Jasper.

“ I feel as though I wanted the whole

world to breathe in," he said; "the air that is allowed to enter this close room stifles me."

According to his desire he was helped into his chair, and Jasper walked by his side and wheeled him slowly up and down. The sick man drank in the fresh invigorating air as though it were a veritable draught of nectar to his languid spirit. The pleasant spring-like breeze quickened his pulse and stirred the memory of his own spring-time, and he talked to Jasper as he had not talked for many a day, perhaps many a year. The flood-tide of memory swept through his mind and washed up broken fragments of his past life woven together in a tangled mass; weeds and flowers, scraps of thought, intentions that had perished before they ripened into action, and many other long-buried things rose up in his memory and found utterance from his tongue, show-

ing that few even of the trivial circumstances of life are ever really forgotten, though for a time they may be hidden away.

“How well I remember the planting of these birch-trees,” said Mr. Brantynham, pointing to a mass of them which grew below; “it was on just such a day as this, though of course at a different season. They were mere saplings, and I was just of age. They are fine flourishing trees now, and look at me!”

“Well, you have had all the wear and tear, the excitement and the pleasures of human life,” replied Jasper; “you have rushed with iron wings from one end of the world to the other, seeing strange lands and strange people; ay, and you have had the world’s work to do, father; but the tree has stood still, and has had nothing to do but to grow, put out its

leaves in summer-time, and stand blank and bare through the winter months, waiting patiently till the spring clothes it with green again. I'd rather be a living, acting man for a month, than a tree for a hundred years. Don't envy the poor old birch; he'll grow old and grey, and lay his head low one day like the rest of us."

"Ay, ay," said the old man; "but if he had eyes and ears, Jasper, what tales he'd tell! I remember everything that occurred the day we planted him as though it had happened a week ago; ay, even down to the colour of my mother's gown. I remember our conversation as we walked down by the lake yonder; we had tents erected down there in the meadows for the tenantry. Ay! Jasper, that was a fine time for Brantynham; but things change, change sadly."

"It is quite as well they do," he replied;

“it would not answer for anything to stand still. Only fancy, if the sun took an obstinate fit into its blazing head and refused to move! What would become of us? We should be smashed into smithereens, or dashed into nowhere and never find our way back again.”

“Well, I suppose it is all right,” sighed his father; “but I feel I’m an old man, older than I ought to be. There is Mr. Forester, who is a good ten years my senior, yet he rides to the hounds still.”

“So perhaps you may, when you are right again.”

“No, I never shall, never mount again; or if I do I shall ride my death ride, Jasper. But I was as good a huntsman as any in the field once; the dogs answer to my cry still.” He put his hands to his mouth and gave a feeble “Tally-ho!” the very ghost of the old cry; but the dogs

heard and answered it from their kennel hard by, as we would answer a call from our dead. Then he got excited and gave Jasper some account of his adventures in his old sporting days, and grew warm and eloquent; as though he were living them over again, as mentally no doubt he was.

During their conversation Joseph Atherton appeared from behind a laurel-hedge which separated that part of the terrace from the flower-garden. He sauntered slowly towards them, gave a friendly nod to Jasper, laid his hand on Mr. Brantynham's shoulder, and said, with an appearance of affectionate solicitude—

“I'm glad to see you out this genial morning; if there is the least glimpse of sunshine to be got you're sure to find it here. I've just been round to Jackson's farm; he is very anxious about the renewal of his lease, but I told him I didn't think you'd do it.”

“Why shouldn’t I?” asked the old man, testily. “He is a good tenant and pays his rent regularly.”

“Well, yes,” answered Joseph, considering, “he does that; but you remember he showed his teeth about the right of way through Merton Meadows.”

“And I daresay I deserved biting for disputing it,” said Mr. Brantynham; “the lawyers settled that he was right and I was wrong. I was fairly beaten and I don’t bear malice.”

“Of course not. You speak just as I expected you would,” replied Joseph; “but if you determine to let him continue at the place I’m afraid there will be some unpleasantness about it.”

“Why?”

“Because people generally object to have their rent raised,” answered Joseph; “and if you renew the lease, in common justice to yourself it must be at an



advanced rental. The Jacksons hold the farm at a very low rate; another tenant would pay double the price and be glad to get it."

"That is a consideration," said Mr. Brantynham, reflectively; "but don't trouble me about it, Joe; let Jasper decide. It concerns him perhaps now more than it concerns me."

"The Jacksons have occupied the farm for many years, father, have they not?" said Jasper, speaking for the first time, though he had been listening attentively to all they said.

"Yes, the grandfather of the present man held it when I was a boy," he answered.

"Ay, but they have been splendid agriculturists, one and all," said Joseph; "and the property has improved greatly in their hands. It is worth double the money it

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was. I'm looking after your interest, Jasper. You'll be the owner of the place one day, and for your sake we must make the best arrangements we can with the tenants."

"Thanks. You are very considerate, Joe," replied Jasper; "but as you tell me it is the labour of their hands that has increased the value of our land it is only fair that they should reap the benefit of it. I shall consider it an act of downright dishonesty to turn them out of the farm."

"How can that be when the law is on your side?" said Atherton.

"That may be," replied Jasper; "but the man who carries out the letter of the law sometimes distorts the spirit, and is a greater rogue than he who infringes it."

"You take a sentimental view of the subject, but sentiment doesn't pay. You'll live to find that out."

“To my mind sentiment is one of the few things that does pay,” replied Jasper, “and sometimes with interest too.”

“I don’t understand you,” said Atherton.

“I did not suppose you would,” rejoined Jasper. “My father has left the matter for me to decide, so see about the lease, will you? Halloo! why that is Jackson coming out of the plantation, is it not? I’ll see him and tell him it is all right.” He strode away and called out for the farmer to stop. Atherton scowled after him, and, turning to Mr. Brantynham, said—

“If Jasper is allowed to meddle with affairs in that fashion they’ll all go wrong. Of course if he was always here and had the management it would be a different thing; but as it is he knows no more of the tenants on the property than a child.”

“That’s true,” said Mr. Brantynham, ignoring the injured tone Joe chose to

adopt; "he must spend more time among them. It is right he should."

Atherton continued talking in the same strain; meanwhile Jasper had come up with the farmer, exchanged "good morrows," and said—

"It is all right about the farm, Jackson; orders shall be at once given for the lease to be drawn up on precisely the same terms as you hold it."

"God bless you for that, sir," replied the farmer, heartily, and evidently taken by surprise. "I've lived there forty years, man and boy, till I've growed to the soil like. It would have gone hard wi' me if I'd been turned out. Mr. Atherton's been very kind; he said he'd try hard for the lease, but he didn't hold out much hope as you'd agree."

"We, that is my father and I, have only just learnt that your lease was out," replied

Jasper, "and without a moment's hesitation decided on granting you a renewal."

"That's so, sir," said the farmer, glancing sharply in his face. "Ah! it is a pity he can't come among us as he used to do; or you either, sir, begging your pardon. We all on us clings to the old family somehow, and we don't take kindly to strangers coming round."

"All in good time. I shall be more among you one of these days," replied Jasper, as he sauntered slowly back to the spot where his father still sat in the sunshine, conversing with Joseph Atherton, who slunk away as Jasper approached.

"I've made it all right, father," he said; "and I think Jackson's taken home a lighter heart than he brought away with him."

"Ay, ay! that is all very well in this case, Jasper," he answered; "but it wont do to

cross Joseph another time. I don't think he altogether likes the Jacksons."

"But surely you would not be unjust because of his likes or his dislikes?" said Jasper.

"There, don't talk; I can't be worried with arguments," exclaimed the old man, interrupting him hastily. "Remember, Joe is here all the year round, working hard, and looking after the property, while *you* are enjoying yourself in London. I don't know what I should do without him: he's more like my own son than——" He was going to say, "than you are," but he stopped short, and added, quickly, "I do wish you would marry, and settle down at home."

"Don't speak of it," said Jasper. "I'm too young to marry."

"What nonsense! Why, you are twenty-seven."

“Well, then, the women are too old for me; perhaps that is what I mean,” said Jasper.

“There are plenty of young ones,” replied his father, by no means comprehending him. “Of course I would not have you marry an old woman. No man does that unless he takes her for her money or position; and I am proud to say you want neither one nor the other. Not that I should like you to marry a nobody.”

“It would puzzle the parson to tie the knot,” said Jasper; “*I* being a substantial somebody could not very well be attached to nobody.”

“You know what I mean. You must marry a person of good family and eligible connexions. I could mention half a dozen right off, any one of whom would be a capital match. There’s Fanny Highton.”

“She’d be more than a match for me,”

“I shall be a long time choosing,” replied Jasper. “At the present moment I should as soon think of putting a ring through my own nose as on a woman’s finger; indeed, the latter process is the more unlikely of the two. I don’t want to be a woman’s toy, nor yet a woman’s dupe; and most men are either one or the other. The one takes stock of your personal appearance—eyes, hair, figure, complexion, are all duly chronicled; and she takes you as a sort of living toy that she can play with, torture, or tantalize at pleasure. She will prick your heart to see if it bleeds, just as years ago she stabbed her doll and watched the sawdust flow from the gaping wound. If you feel it, make wry faces and flinch, you are called a fool; if you bear it with stoical indifference, you are libelled as a monster, and have to stem a torrent of hysterical tears and reproaches. Now the



never seen but one woman who was worthy of a man's pure, unadulterated love." His voice deepened, and the colour flew to his face, as though some tender chord was touched and vibrated through his whole nature. Mr. Brantynham did not seem to heed his last sentence, his thoughts had wandered to something else. After a momentary pause he said—

"I am glad to have had this talk with you, though I don't know whether I'm glad or sorry to hear you speak as you do; one thing it shows me—that you are free, and—and—I may as well tell you the truth," he added briskly, "something my wife hinted to me made me fear." The blood seemed to glow and rush like fire through Jasper's veins, but he commanded his voice and inquired calmly—

"What has Mrs. Brantynham said? what has she dared to say of me?"

“No harm, Jasper, no harm,” answered his father; “she only said she thought—that is, she believed there was some attachment between you and her daughter Kate! She told me so on the very day I was taken ill. I got excited and angry. I think it was that which unstrung my nerves. I told her then as I tell you now, that it could never be.”

“Make your mind quite easy, father,” answered Jasper, “you are right indeed; such a thing could never be. I am very fond of Kate; she is a dear, good little thing, and we are the best of friends—but who’s that?” he added, going quickly towards the laurels, and searching them with his eyes and his hands too, but there was no sign of anybody there. “I’m sure I heard a foot-step; I hate listeners, even though we are talking no particular secrets.”

“Nonsense—it was one of the dogs; who

would care to listen to us? What were we talking of? Oh, I know—about Kate.”

“Yes,” replied Jasper, “and I am very sorry her name should be brought forward in such a way as this. I cannot imagine what motive her mother could have in coupling our names together in this fashion. We have neither of us either directly or indirectly given her any right to do it.”

“I am glad of that—very glad!” rejoined the old man; “it would never have done. I could never have consented to such a terrible *mésalliance*, never. I’ll go in now, I’m tired. I cannot talk any more.”

Jasper wheeled him into the house, and in a few moments he was dozing in the sunshine. Mrs. Brantynham came into the room with a soft velvet tread, and smiled benignantly at Jasper as she took her place by his father’s side.

Jasper strode out, walked hurriedly



## CHAPTER IX.

### A FAIR CONSPIRATOR.

**T**HE wanderings of Jasper caused some consternation at Brantynham, where they delayed luncheon an hour, every moment expecting his return; finding he did not come Mrs. Brantynham entered into vague speculation respecting his absence. "Where could he be? Had he gone out riding or on foot? Surely nothing could have happened to him! It was unaccountable that he should stay away like this; during the whole of his father's illness he had rarely been absent beyond an hour."

Mr. Brantynham enjoyed a long, re-

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freshing sleep, and the first moment he awoke he asked for his son, but expressed no surprise on being told that Jasper had been out since the morning. He then asked for papers, which he specified, and directed where they would be found; when they were given into his hand he desired to be alone, and spent the greater part of the day dozing and dreaming over his papers, under the delusion that he was transacting business. Meanwhile Mrs. Brantynham sat working in the adjoining room, near the bay-window, looking out anxiously now and then across the fields, where she would gain the first view of any one coming up from the town; but the truant she was watching for failed to make his appearance in that direction. Presently she left off working, let her hands fall in her lap, and gazed speculatively at her daughter Kate, who sat at the table doing some copying for her

brother Joseph. Once or twice she paused a moment from her employment, and at last laid down her pen, pushed the hair back from her temples, and said, wearily—

“This is tiring work, mamma; the figures make my eyes ache.” Then, struck by the expression of her mother’s face, she added, “How anxious you look, mamma! Is anything the matter—is there anything wrong with Joe?”

“There may be many things to make me anxious without anything being ‘wrong with Joe,’” replied Mrs. Brantynham, “and I wish you would not use that expression, Kate, as though it were a common matter for things to go wrong with Joe. It sounds like an insinuation against your brother.”

“I did not mean it for that, mamma,” Kate answered; “I only wanted to know what made you so grave. I thought

Mr. Brantynham was better this morning."

"Fortunately for us, he is," replied Mrs. Brantynham; "if anything happened to *him* I don't know what would become of *us*; we should be little more than beggars. I must say, considering the way in which we have sacrificed ourselves for the last ten years, I expected things would have turned out differently, but as people grow old they get selfish and ungrateful."

"You cannot say that of Mr. Brantynham," said Kate, in accents of slight reproach. "See how kind he is—how kind he has been to us all these years."

"Well he may be," rejoined Mrs. Brantynham, tartly, "considering how we devote ourselves to him and the care we take of his property. It is all very well for him to be kind to us *now*, but he would show his kindness better if he made some suitable

provision for us after he has gone. Your brother works like a slave on the estate, and gets little for his pains but barren thanks."

"But you know he is better here than he would be anywhere else, mamma," said Kate; "he would have to rough it in the world and push his way with other men, or else he would go to the wall. You know he is not fond of work, and here he can live at ease; he is treated like a gentleman, can do exactly as he pleases, and has a handsome allowance, and——" she coloured slightly and hesitated, as though she hardly liked to refer to the matter she was thinking of. Seeing her hesitation, Mrs. Brantynham rejoined, repeating her last word—

"And—what? Do speak out, Kate. I hate hesitation in speech; it shows weakness of mind."

"Well," answered her daughter, "I was



going to say you have often told us that you had a very handsome settlement."

"Circumstances alter facts; what was very handsome ten years ago would not be handsome now. Besides, I have got so accustomed to the old Hall that I should never like to leave; and whenever Mr. Brantynham dies—I—we all must go. I don't suppose Jasper would care to have us here."

"No, I don't suppose he would," said Kate, turning to resume her writing, and bending low over her work. "Most likely he would marry and bring his wife home to Brantynham. That time you know must come in the natural course of things."

"I don't know about that," replied her mother, with a scrutinizing look upon her face; "a great deal depends on the sort of wife he gets. Indeed I must say at one time I thought you might have managed it,

and I think so still if you would be guided by me and give your mind to it."

"Give my mind to what, mamma? I don't understand you."

"Ah! you understand me well enough, though you may choose to pretend innocent unconsciousness," replied Mrs. Brantynham; "it is an acknowledged fact that a woman may marry any man she pleases, if she will only set her mind upon it."

"But, mamma," said Kate, trying to treat the subject lightly, "I would rather the man I love should set his mind on marrying me."

"The man you love," repeated her mother, with an air of shocked propriety. "I don't call that a delicate expression for a young lady to use. However, in these days people can't afford to take love into consideration; marriage is quite serious enough—though I am sure Jasper is very

fond of you, and only wants a little encouragement to fall desperately in love."

Mrs. Brantynham did not see the pain which the turn the conversation had taken was giving her child; indeed, if she had it is probable she would have probed her deeper. She could not see that it was cruel to taunt her with the thought of Jasper's love. Poor Kate, in the cold unsympathetic life that surrounded her, had learned to look to him and him only for genial warmth and sunshine. The one small romance of her hidden life was centred in him; he was the sun round whom her planetary thoughts revolved continually. The possibility of what her mother now suggested had never occurred to her, even in her wildest dreams. She knew, and had always known intuitively, that it was their presence at Brantynham which drove him

from his home and made him a stranger to his father's fireside; she knew also, as well as if she had seen it written on the face of the future, that he would never do more than tolerate an Atherton, that she could never hope to be more to him than the simple friend she now was, and she was grateful to him for permitting her to be so much. And yet her mother's words stirred her strangely, gave her a sharp pain and a bitter pleasure, she could hardly have told which was the strongest. It was sweet to know they stood side by side together in another's mind, reflected there as in a looking-glass, though she knew it was a mere picture, a dead image that would never quicken into life. The words "I'm sure he's very fond of you," which dropped from her mother's lips, fell gratefully on her ear, though she believed there was no truth in it. It was a mere assertion

void of all foundation, and yet it gladdened her to hear it. It conjured up in her mind a fabulous castle in the unsubstantial air, glorious for the imagination to look on, though it faded at a breath and left an empty space where it had seemed to be a reality. It gave her the bitter pain, and roused a sense of humiliation to know that it could never be real; she might starve, she might perish for the want of it, but she knew that even a single grain of his love would never fall to her lot. Kate was for the moment too much occupied by her own emotional thoughts to answer her mother; and Mrs. Brantynham augured well from her silence, and continued harping upon the same string, urging the advisability, and possibility too, of a marriage between Kate and Jasper; giving her at the same time a detailed account of the dire misfortune it would be for them if

Mr. Brantynham died or Jasper married out of the family, adding—

“It would be easy, very easy, for *you*, Kate, to manage things satisfactorily to all parties.”

“Hardly to *all* parties, mamma,” she answered; “it could hardly be to the satisfaction of the man I had cajoled, as you would have me, into a marriage which he might repent for all his life afterwards.”

“Let him repent as he pleased. Once done it could not be undone,” replied Mrs. Brantynham; “and I am quite sure Jasper has too much manly, chivalrous feeling to revenge his mistake on you, even if it were a mistake and he were wise enough to find it out.”

“And it is for that very reason, because he is so good and kind, that I would never take advantage of him,” replied Kate, warmly.

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“That sounds very well,” replied Mrs. Brantynham, “and from a girl of your age one expects to hear sentimental folly; as you grow older you will grow wiser. Every woman takes advantage more or less of a man when she marries him. ‘Men and women make love in masks,’ Pope says, and he was right. If the motive power of action could be laid bare to each other’s eyes, or if they could be imprisoned in a Palace of Truth for four-and-twenty hours, when the gates opened they would each take a different road—that would not culminate at the altar. At any rate every man must, or most likely will, marry at some time of his life, and there is no telling into what designing hands Jasper may fall. As you say, he is a fine, chivalrous, open-hearted fellow, and it is generally that sort of man who gets drawn into a miserable marriage. It is that I would save him from. I am sure,” she

added, laying her hand caressingly on her daughter's head, "he would never get a better, sweeter wife than my darling Kate."

"Your argument wont do, mamma," answered the girl. "You would save him from one designing woman to secure him for another!"

Mrs. Brantynham made a movement of angry impatience, saying—

"I don't think you would care if we were all turned into the street to starve. You would not stir to save us, not even to save yourself."

"Don't be angry, mamma!" answered Kate, looking in her face with tearful eyes. "I would do almost anything to please you, but not this; don't speak of it again. It is this unnatural coupling together of hands—this forcing together by some hidden influence people who would never have chosen one another—that brings about the social tragedies which are always breaking out in



people's lives. Jasper cares nothing for me, and I," she added, with a deep-drawn breath, "care nothing for him."

She gathered up her writing materials and was hurrying from the room, when her brother Joseph met her on the threshold, took her hand, and drew her back, saying—

"What, Kate ! flushed and crying? What on earth is the matter?" He looked to his mother as though demanding an explanation of her.

"Nothing particular," she answered; and a quick glance of intelligence passed between them. "I have only been speaking of the state of our affairs—not as they are, but as in case of certain events they may be—and showed her the remedy. Then Jasper's name happened to come up; she got into heroics, and declared that he cared nothing for her and she cared nothing for him."

Joseph looked grave, kissed his sister, and said, regretfully—

“Still fancy free, eh, Kate? Well, never mind; if things are so they can't be helped. I've heard something to-day that made me glad at first, but now I sympathize with Jasper. I can't rejoice even in the disappointment of an enemy, and I'm sorry for him.”

“Sorry for him!” echoed Kate, eagerly. “Why, what is the matter? Has anything happened to him?”

“No, but something will happen to him when he comes home to-night, and you tell him to his face what you have said behind his back, that you ‘care nothing for him.’”

“Why should I tell him so?” she answered. “What can it matter whether I care for him or not?”

“A great deal,” replied her brother, “for he cares a great deal for you, Kitty. I heard—you know one hears many things without listening—and I heard him talking

to his father about *you*. I was behind the laurels making some calculations. I could not catch every word, but on my honour—I'll take my oath upon it if you like—I heard Jasper say, 'Nothing could alter my feelings for Kate, father: I love her dearly.' From the few words which I picked up after that I honestly believe he was asking his father's leave before he engaged himself to you."

"Take care what you are saying, Joe," exclaimed Kate, trying to keep down the wild thrill of delight that sent the blood coursing through her veins; but her eyes would dance and her voice would tremble in the excess of joy his words created. She never knew she had hoped till now. "Take care what you are saying," she repeated, nervously; "if he cares for me let him tell me so himself. I will not hear it, I will not believe it, from any lips but his. Let me

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go, Joe; let me go!" Saying this she wrenched her hands from his and escaped from the room.

Her brother waited till the door had closed upon her, then he flung himself into a chair and burst into a chuckling, half-smothered fit of laughter which threatened to choke him, and collected the blood in his face as though he were seized with apoplexy. Mrs. Brantynham glared at him in angry surprise, and said—

"I'm glad to see you merry. I wish you could look our circumstances in the face and find cause for laughing."

"And so you might if you looked for it in the right direction," he answered. "Why, mother, I should have thought you could see into a millstone as far as most people, and yet you can't see to the bottom of a foolish girl's heart." He pointed to the door, adding, "Did you notice her eyes—

her words—her tone? Did you look into her face? Did that look like not caring?"

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Brantynham, and though she asked the question a glimmering of the truth broke upon her mind.

"Mean!" he echoed. "Why I mean to say if ever a girl was unexpectedly caught wandering in a fool's paradise that girl is my sister Kate."

"And did you speak the truth in what you said just now, when you first came in?" inquired his mother, in a low eager voice.

"Truth!" he answered, with an appearance of offended dignity; "you hardly suppose I should tell a lie?"

"No, no," she answered, smoothing his ruffled feathers; "but I thought in such a case as this, and with a good motive, Joe, you might have exaggerated a little, that's all."

"I repeated the words I heard, neither

more nor less, and without any embellishment of my own," he replied ; "and I think things will go swimmingly. I don't see why they shouldn't; though I fancy Jasper had some difficulty in managing the old man. I don't know whether he succeeded at last. But it does not much matter; he'll soon have things in his own hands. I think it is quite right that he should marry Kate, and it would be an infamous shame if he married anybody else after winning her affections as he has done. So I should tell him if I suspected him of any slippery ways."

"Jasper's not a man to be bullied, Joe, even into doing a right and honourable thing," replied Mrs. Brantynham; "he's easy to lead, with prudence of course, but he will not be driven. Some horses, you know," she added, smiling her hard smile, "will be guided by a snaffle, when a curb or whip would goad them to fury."

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It had been the darling scheme of Mrs. Brantynham's life to marry her daughter to the unsuspecting Jasper, so that by that means she might secure a firm hold upon the Brantynham estates. She had always been steering matters that way, but as time rolled on she had found herself as far as ever from her object until that day. On the state of Kate's affections she had never wasted a thought. The idea of a girl, especially a daughter of hers, having a heart to give away, and giving it too without an equivalent in good hard cash or a handsome settlement, never entered her thoughts. Now that her son had communicated the first fruits of his eavesdropping to her, she believed, and, what is perhaps stranger still, he believed himself, and so far as his ears served him he reported correctly. He had gathered a few stray words and phrases, and pieced them together to answer the family desires. It is so easy on the slightest

encouragement to believe that what we hope is true.

It was late in the afternoon, and the speculative powers of mother and son were almost exhausted, when Jasper came swinging across the fields homeward, unconscious of one bright eager face that was watching for him with a heart fluttering with new-born hopes and beating high with expectation. In his anxiety to reach home he avoided the regular road, and came a near way across the meadows, vaulting over five-barred gates and such other surmountable barriers as stood in his way. On reaching the house he paid a hasty visit to his father's room, to apologize for his long absence, and having ascertained that all was right there he made a hurried toilet and descended to the drawing-room. There he found Joseph Atherton, Mrs. Brantynham, and Kate, all seemingly in a



high state of satisfaction, and especially inclined to be gracious to him. There was an unusual bloom and radiancy on Katie's face, but he never noticed that. When the heart is not deeply interested the eyes often fail in their observation. The least change in those we love is easily discerned; no matter if it be only a hair awry, or the misplacement of a curl, or if the complexion be a shade paler or deeper, or if the eyes droop, or the lip tremble, or if the invisible spirit send a shade of anxiety to the brow, it is observed at once. Indeed, so keen are the senses of love that the heart seems to discover any change in the beloved without the use of eyes. Jasper exchanged the usual commonplace greetings all round, and Joseph said—

“It is all right about the farm; I rode over to Lidscombe to give orders that the papers should be drawn up and your in-

structions about the lease carried out with the slightest delay."

"That's right," answered Jasper; "I wouldn't have had the Jacksons turned out for double the worth of it."

"I fancied you had gone into town on the same errand," rejoined Joe.

"I've not been near it," replied Jasper; "I've been wandering about the woods all day long."

"Alone?" inquired Mrs. Brantynham.

"Bodily, yes!" he answered; "but I find my own thoughts all-sufficient companions."

"Your own thoughts are sometimes the very worst companions you can have!" said Mrs. Brantynham. "I find mine generally wearisome."

"On the contrary," he answered, "I can spend a few pleasant hours with my own thoughts, when I should be intolerably

bored with the thoughts or conversation of other people."

"Perhaps you have had something unusually pleasant to think of to-day?" said Kate, speaking for the first time.

"One pleasant thing I had," he answered, "and that was you, Kate. My father and I were talking about you this morning, and I have been making a digest in my own mind of our conversation."

"What could you have been saying about me?" said Kate, timidly, though her cheeks crimsoned and her heart bounded in her breast.

"Ah!" he answered, "I wont tell you half the pretty things we said of you, for fear it should make you vain. This much I'll whisper, Kate," he added, lowering, or affecting to lower his voice; "I was making inquiries about your admirers, and——"

"Ay, there are plenty of them," broke

in her brother, interrupting him, and rubbing his hands gleefully together ; “and I tell you what, Master Jasper, if one don’t speak soon, another will. There will be a game of lost and won played out here before long.”

“Well, there’s a great prize at stake, and I’ll wish the winner joy if it is honestly won,” replied Jasper, smiling kindly ; “but remember, Kate, I’ll never forgive you if I’m not chosen as best man, next to the bridegroom ; of course I’ll yield him all honours.”

These last few words gave a sudden and unexpected turn to the conversation, and quite unintentionally Joseph had helped him, though the turn was in a different direction from that which he had intended. Jasper saw from his father’s communication what he had never before suspected, that both Mrs. Brantynham and Joseph

were anxious to draw him into an engagement with the unconscious Kate, whom he believed to be as innocent of all participation in their plans as he was himself. He had decided during his long day's deliberations to put a speedy end to their expectations, so far as he was concerned. But he had no idea that in doing so he aimed a blow at her, or he would rather have bitten off his tongue than uttered a word to wound her. He knew they had a brotherly and sisterly regard for each other, more indeed than could have been expected, considering their family circumstances, but he neither desired nor expected a warmer regard to spring up on either side.

His direct though half-jesting announcement that he was prepared to be "best man" at Kate's wedding was a stunning blow to Mrs. Brantynham's expectations; they recovered and bloomed again, though,

when Joseph gave his colouring to the conversation. He declared it to be a mere ruse on Jasper's part to take soundings of Kate's own disposition towards him. There was an effectual stop put to the conversation before it could go any farther, for the last words had hardly left Jasper's lips when dinner was announced. That social meal was despatched as speedily as possible by all parties; there being very little talking and a little forced laughter to enliven the proceedings, which were carried on under the stern eyes of Mr. Richards, the family butler, who considered the dinner the most important fact of the day, and as such to be carried on with due ceremony and consideration. He stood against the sideboard giving orders in dumb show to his satellites, who revolved round him, the superior planet in the domestic circle.

In due time, however, in the common course of things, the dinner came to an

end. Jasper went to his father's room, and remained there in close conversation with him for a couple of hours, indeed till he retired to rest. Then, he lighted his cigar and marched up and down the terrace cogitating, and looking upon life as a gigantic chess-board, arranging his plans like so many pieces thereon, calculating the very moves he must make before the game could be his ; forgetting that at any moment the one great adversary Fate might rise up, and by a single move checkmate him and clear the board. He was quite unaware of the fact that he was being scanned by curious eyes, and his sayings and doings canvassed over by the family group in the drawing-room. Presently he directed his steps toward it and looked in at the uncurtained window. Kate rose and opened it, supposing he wished to enter.

"Thanks; no," he said ; "I am not coming

in. It is such a lovely night, Katty, do throw on some wraps and come out and keep me company; it is glorious here in the moonlight."

She was by no means loth to accept his invitation, and in the course of a few moments had thrown on a hood and cloak and was walking with him arm in arm beneath the soft still moon. At first they chatted on commonplace, indifferent matters; but Jasper had something to say and he meant to say it, so that there should be no misunderstanding between them, whatever there might be with the rest of the family. When the tap of small-talk had been turned on over freely and become exhausted he said—

"Ours has been a queer sort of intercourse, Katie. Considering the relationship of our respective families, I wonder how we have managed to like one another so well."



He looked down, his eyes beaming kindly on the slight figure beside him. She on her part glanced up at his tall, stalwart figure, and at the manly face with its wealth of crisp curly hair, and wondered how much or how little he meant by "so well." Did he know? Did he guess how "well" she had learned to "like?" She smiled in answer to him, and said something about "seeing nothing very surprising in the matter."

"I hope nothing will ever happen to make us change in our feelings towards one another," he added. "I should not like my little sister Kate to hate me quite."

"Hate you!" she repeated. "What a horrid word. Nothing on earth could make me do that. It is beyond the pale of possibility."

"*I* can imagine the possibility," he answered. "One might be forced to misunderstand, misconstrue one another; and I

wish to do away so far as I can with the chances of that." She looked at him in open-eyed wonder. What was he going to say next?

"You will forgive me, Kate, if what I say seems impertinent," he added; "but I am going away from Brantynham by an early train to-morrow, and—and I want to say a few words to establish perfect confidence between us before we part. It is an awkward thing to say, but it concerns us equally: it is best to speak plainly. My father tells me that Mrs. Brantynham has led him to believe that you and I have formed a clandestine attachment to one another, which is a vile calumny against us both. I thought you had better hear the report from me, as I did not know how, nor in what fashion, nor with what intent, the report might reach you. Circumstanced as we are you would perhaps

have felt some delicacy in speaking of the matter; and you might even have been led to suppose that *I* had had something to do in raising the slander."

"I should never believe you could do anything unbecoming a man and a gentleman," replied Kate. Her cheeks burnt and her eyes were full of tears, but she kept her voice steady and calm. "I am very glad you have spoken to me, Jasper; because now if I am sympathetically and confidentially informed that you have wasted your affections upon *me*, or vice versâ, I shall know what answer to give. But don't you think we are giving some faint colouring to the report now? May not this mysterious moonlight walk be brought in evidence against us?"

Jasper did not want to dwell on the subject, but he was glad to have relieved his mind so far; it was pleasant to be able to

He spoke to Kate in such a frank, friendly way. He did not much care now to what extent the rest of the family chose to invent or deceive themselves. Kate herself, who was the chief party concerned, understood him; there was no fear of her misconstruing, and he was satisfied.

Kate was weary and heart-sick, and would fain have returned to the house at once, but Jasper detained her; he had so many last little things to say, so many directions to give about his father, that she could not without absolute discourtesy leave him. At last he acknowledged it was time to go in, and said, in conclusion—

“ You will watch over him, Katie, and don’t leave the task of writing to your mother. Write to me once a week yourself, and give me *all* home news.” She promised to do all that was required of her, and led the way round to the front door, to return

to the house that way. She did not want to enter by the drawing-room window, as the glare of light there would flame upon her face, and reveal the pain and humiliation which she would rather have died than allow her tongue to proclaim aloud.

As they stood upon the threshold she laid her hand lightly in his and looked earnestly in his face, as though to read his thoughts, saying—

“You don’t blame me, Jasper? You don’t think I have had anything to do with this—this ridiculous report?”

“You, my dear Kate! No,” he answered, giving her hand a hearty squeeze; “I am not such an egregious ass as that. I should as soon suspect you of falling in love with me in earnest as spreading such a report in jest.”

They exchanged “Good night.” Jasper

went straight to his room. Kate would fain have done the like, for she was in no mood to talk or be talked to; but she felt she must rejoin her mother and brother in the drawing-room for a moment at least, if it were only to say "Good night."

Joseph turned and scrutinized her face as she entered the room, but said nothing. Mrs. Brantynham exclaimed, in a low eager voice—

"Well, child, what did he want?"

"Nothing, mamma, except to tell me he was going to leave Brantynham by an early train to-morrow," answered Kate.

"Leave to-morrow!" repeated Mrs. Brantynham, amazed. "But why, Kate, why? What has happened to make him take this sudden resolution? Could *you* do nothing to detain him?"

"I, mamma! No. What could I do?"

she answered. "I have no power either to control or direct his movements, and—and I am glad he is going," she added quickly; and a half-defiant light sprang into her eyes. Her brother laid his hand upon her shoulder and looked searchingly in her face, as he said, with suppressed anger—

"You have not been mad enough to—— But no; you would hardly be fool enough for that," he added, as he turned away with an air of assumed indifference.

"He took a long time to tell you the mere fact that he was going away," said Mrs. Brantynham.

"Oh, but he did not confine himself to the mere statement of that interesting fact," said Kate; "he told me many other things as well."

"I don't want to pry into your secrets," said Mrs. Brantynham, virtuously; "but I must say I don't think it is consistent with

womanly delicacy and self-respect to be summoned out to stroll *alone* with a gentleman by moonlight; unless there is some sufficient cause. I don't wonder at people talking. If Jasper has no care for himself he has no right to compromise *you*. So I shall tell him."

"Will you, mamma?" said Kate. "Well, if you do I am sure he will give you a satisfactory answer; but take care lest in your desire to extricate *me* you compromise yourself. Jasper has keen eyes, and sees more of most games than people give him credit for. Good night." She nodded, took her candle, and went to bed.

"That girl is in a devil of a humour to-day," said Joseph. "Something has gone wrong between them; but what?"

"We must wait and see," answered Mrs. Brantynham. "It is evident no good will be got by asking questions."





## CHAPTER X.

### NOBLE AND IGNOBLE.

**I**T was December when the Maitlands first took up their abode in Great Marylebone Street. March came and found them still there. The few weeks or months that had intervened had wrought a great change in Philippa; the bright buoyant spirit with which she once determined to face the world got so bruised and shaken when she came into actual collision with it, that the buoyancy was beaten out and the brightness faded away. Far off, and first seen in the distance, poverty had been surrounded by a poetical halo. She fancied it would be no hardship to have to

work for her daily bread ; she felt as though a wider walk in life was opening before her, showing her new busy paths which she would find it easy to tread. Her naturally energetic spirit had long felt the need of a more exciting employment than the mere superintendence of her father's quiet household afforded her ; she had always longed to be doing, and felt it would be a pride and a pleasure to eat the bread her own hands had earned. But she soon found there was nothing to be done ; she had no available talent to take to the labour market ; there was no bread to be earned, at least to be earned by her, in the way she had thought would be easy. She was accomplished, as the word is understood in the present day ; but when she tried to turn her accomplishments to advantage she found them utterly useless, in fact rather an encumbrance than anything else. It is as-

tonishing, especially to the parties most concerned, to find that the talents or accomplishments which have gained the wonder of admiring friends, the praises of affectionate relatives, when brought into the world of sale and barter gain no bidders, and fail to win even a crust for their owner.

Philippa had done her best with such talent as she possessed, but with very small effect. She tried to get pupils for music, and received but one solitary offer. She was invited to give musical instruction in a baker's family for the sum of five shillings a week, and to take one half her earnings out in bread ! Still she waited and hoped. Her drawing-master had said that she possessed all the elements necessary for the making of a good artist ; so she turned her attention that way and worked very hard at water-colour drawing, and produced some very spirited

sketches too. With every stroke of her brush there arose an unuttered prayer from her heart that she might succeed in this.

Poverty had come very near to them, revealing its ugliness by degrees, till it came so close, thrusting its grim visage before her eyes, that she could not shut it out. Her slender stock of money was almost exhausted; she could already see to the bottom of her purse, and knew almost to a day how long it would last. Money must be got, must be earned; but how? On first taking possession of the apartments she had laid by enough to pay the rent for six months, so that for that time they might secure a home over their heads without taking advantage of Martha's kindness in a pecuniary way; they were indebted to her affection deeply enough. With all her watchfulness, Martha never knew to what straits the Maitlands were really reduced;

Philippa never allowed her to see how scantily their table was furnished, lest she should be led, by that munificent charity of the poor towards the poor, to furnish it from her own. Although Philippa was reserved in the extreme, Martha had eyes, and could see in the young girl's face the privations she endured. It was no use trying to mislead or deceive *her*; she knew right well that any little luxury or delicacy that was attainable was carefully reserved for Mr. Maitland's private entertainment. Philippa always brought forward some plea to excuse herself from sharing it; she denied herself, indeed, anything beyond the merest necessities of life, and partook but sparingly of them. As things looked blacker—everything was going out, nothing coming in—it seemed the darkest hour must soon come. Philippa struggled hard to renew her old hopeful spirit.

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“Something must turn up soon,” she thought. “God will not let us starve.” Then she set herself cheerfully to her task, working early and late. She was never satisfied with what she had done, but lingered at the easel, giving last touches, looking on it from all sides, wondering how it would strike a stranger’s eye. Martha paid her periodical visits, looking over her shoulder as she busily plied her brush, admiring and criticising her work, often making Philippa smile by her quaint remarks. The finishing touch was just laid upon the last of a set of landscapes, with which she had taken special pains. She laid her brush wearily down and leaned back in her chair, wondering what the world would think, what success she would have in her attempts to sell them. She intended to pack them all up together and make the trial at once. Martha stood by

her side, her fat arms crossed upon her breast, her head on one side, like an inquisitive bird, as she exclaimed—

“Well, if you don’t make a fortin in real earnest now, my dear, I’ll pick out my eyes and eat ’em. I ain’t got a cultiwated taste, I know, but I do call that a beautiful pictur. I can almost fancy I’m walkin’ under them trees myself; and as for the animals, anybody could see they’re cows. They’re so like, dear, my hands itch to be milkin’ ’em.” Philippa smiled in affectionate appreciation of her praises, and answered—

“I like to hear you praise my work, but I’m afraid the world will not see it with your eyes.”

“The world wants spectacles, my dear,” said Martha, “and I’d like ’em to have a pair of my invention to look through, and me to fix the price they ought to pay. Now I should say,” she added, deliberately

scrutinizing the drawing, as though she meant to buy, "as that pictur 'ud go dirt cheap for twenty guineas."

"I mean to ask a guinea each for them," said Philippa, "and I shall think myself very fortunate if I get it."

"Well, some people is thankful for small mercies," observed Martha; "but I mean to say as the man as 'ud give one dirty guinea for such a thing as that ought to walk with his head in a sack and be labelled 'art crusher,' though I dare say he'd call hisself a 'art patronizer.'"

She busied herself packing the sketches while Philippa went into the adjoining room, and soon returned cloaked and veiled ready to depart. Martha put the portfolio into her hand, kissed her, and gave her a parting hug.

"Wish me good luck," said Philippa.

"I do, dearie, and you'll come back with



heaps of it enough to smother you; but don't be downhearted if you ain't successful just at first. March in boldly, as though you was a great artist going to allow them the honour of buying. Now go, and don't look behind, for I'm going to throw an old shoe after you for luck."

The shoe was thrown and Philippa departed on her cheerless errand, for cheerless indeed she found it. Never had she experienced such a rapid fluctuation of hopes and fears as those which agitated her breast as she paced the London streets that day. She walked from shop to shop till her spirit grew faint and her feet weary. Sometimes she was refused before she had time to open her portfolio, politely always, but still refused. Some examined her sketches one by one, admiring and criticising and giving her kind advice, but they did not buy. It was generally admitted that they were

gracefully designed and admirably executed, but nobody wanted them, nobody was inclined to speculate upon them. One or two as they made their critical remarks enlightened her mind with their own experiences in art matters, and told her they had often been tempted to buy ladies' sketches and failed to sell them; many, they said, were still lying a dead loss upon their hands.

With a sense of bitter humiliation at her heart she gathered up her sketches, uttered her thanks and apologies for troubling them, bowed her head and passed out, scarce able to prevent the hot tears from falling. Daunted, but not utterly downhearted, she resolved to make one more effort, and that should be the last. For this purpose she made her way to an artist's colour-warehouse in Hanway Street. She remembered seeing many very fine water-colour drawings exposed there for sale. She met with

a very polite reception there; indeed if she had come to buy instead of to sell she could not have received more respectful attention, but with no happy result. She was led to understand that the market was overstocked with productions similar to hers. Perhaps her informant's eyes penetrated the thick veil which shrouded her face, and saw the cold shadow fall over it as his fiat went forth against her; for, before she had time to repack her portfolio, he offered to exhibit her works among the many other objects of attraction which filled his window. It need hardly be said that she gratefully accepted his offer, and went her way homeward with a lighter heart, as though the exhibition would insure their sale.

Martha, who was watching anxiously for her return, saw her enter by the private door, and rushed upstairs to hear the news.

Seeing Philippa return without the portfolio, she anticipated a wonderful success and sale of her effects.

“Well, dear, what news?” she exclaimed. “But I needn’t ask, as you’ve come back empty-handed. All sold!” and she clasped her hands in delight.

“Not one!” replied Philippa, feeling as much for her old nurse’s disappointment as for her own. She added quickly, “But they are on view, and I dare say they’ll soon find purchasers. You see I’ve not lost heart.” She called a smile to her lips, and gave Mrs. Titkins a circumstantial account of her day’s doings.

“Well, I don’t know what the world’s comin’ to,” said Mrs. Titkins, in profound disgust. “People ain’t got no taste now-a-days, or you’ve got among the wrong sort, my dear! I think you ought to have gone to some of them ‘R. A.’s,’ or whatever

they're called, as buys picturs and shows 'em to the public at a shilling a head."

Philippa explained to her that she had taken the right, indeed the only way that was open to her. Seeing that she looked pale and faint, as she might well be, having been walking for the last four hours, Martha rapidly disappeared, but returned in a few moments bringing a bowl of strong steaming soup.

"See what that foolish 'Zekiel has been and done," she said, setting it before Philippa; "he's gone and hotted this for me, though he knows I can't abide slops; but, thinks I, it is just the thing for Miss Philippa. Ain't it odd things happenin' so? being ready just as you come in faint and tired, dear!"

Things had happened so many times before when Philippa was over-fatigued. There was sure to be a cup of hot tea or

coffee, or some little dainty which "foolish 'Zekiel" had just prepared for Mrs. Titkins to which Mrs. Titkins particularly objected. Philippa saw through the tender, loving deceit well enough, and as Martha stood beside her coaxing her to "take just a little," her heart swelled with gratitude to the one kind friend God had sent her in her need. She put her arms round her neck and kissed her, saying—

"Ah, Martha, I do believe it is a good thing to be poor; for it is only during our days of trouble that we find out the value of such hearts as yours."

Before the embarrassed Martha could reply, Mr. Maitland's step was heard upon the stairs. His coming was always the signal for Martha's departure; there was an antagonistic feeling between them, and each as a rule avoided the other.

The last few months had wrought a great

change in him. He looked thinner, gaunt, and feeble, and there was a strange expression in his eyes; sharp, keen, and passionate enough at some times, at others they had an unquiet, weak, vacillating expression, as though his intellect was enfeebled as well as his frame. He was a kind of sleeping partner in the troubles which his own imprudence had brought upon his home, but he took no active part in them. His life passed in a quiet, irresponsible manner. Philippa stood between him and the world and bore its buffetings herself, shielding him with her brave young spirit from the cruel blows and humiliations that fell so heavily on her.

Hitherto she had managed that the table should be comfortably spread for him, consulting his taste in all things, making little tempting dainties for him with her own hand, often dining on a mere crust herself; but he never knew, she never let him know,

the straits to which she was frequently reduced. The demon pride was strong at his heart, and he resented Philippa's attempts to earn their livelihood almost as an insult to himself. She could not talk over their circumstances with him or consult him in any way concerning them. When any difficulty rose before him he grew angry and excited, or else sank into a state of despondency and bewailed their condition, and overwhelmed himself with upbraidings as the author of all their trouble. His excitement, either in the one case or the other, increased rather than lessened Philippa's perplexity, as, in addition to her own anxiety, she had the task of soothing him.

A moment's reflection would have convinced him that their household purse was nearly empty, and that some speedy means must be taken to replenish their stock; but he never reflected, or if he did, he never



uttered his reflections aloud. It was easier to him, as it is to many others, to throw aside unpleasant things than to look them in the face steadily and try to overcome them. So it often happens that

“The heart flies back with a glad retreat  
From the debt not due till to-morrow.”

Philippa had schooled herself to meet him always with a cheerful countenance; she did so now, and hurried forward to help him off with his coat, kissed him affectionately, and asked him the news of the day. Instead of answering her, he said, with some discontent—

“I wish you would contrive to be alone when I come home. You are always closeted with that woman when I am away; with Martha, I mean,” he added, testily, noticing her look of surprise. “The intimacy that has sprung up between you two is compromising in the extreme. It is not because

we are poor that we are to associate with people of that sort. The poorest have a right to choose their companions, or to bear their poverty alone."

"Alone!" echoed Philippa; "I have been lonely enough all my life. If I had been left alone through all the misery I have had to bear I should have gone mad."

"That's sensational nonsense," he answered. "*I* have had a share in all your miseries—the lion's share, I think—but I have not gone mad, nor yet so far forgotten myself as to pick up with low associates; and I must say, Philippa, I expected more self-respect from you. I thought that at least my daughter would have some respect for her position."

"My position, papa!" exclaimed Philippa, a look of scornful indignation filling her eyes, and a bitterness creeping into her sweet voice, that was foreign to her nature

as to his ears. "What is my position? I am the daughter of a ruined man, and a poor, penniless girl, the most helpless, forlorn creature in all this working world—friendless except for the one true-hearted friend, the one of that noblest 'sort' whom God sometimes sends to show that He has not quite forsaken us. For shame, papa, for shame! to speak of our one solitary friend in that cold, scornful way!"

"I'm sure I don't know what she has done to establish such a wonderful claim upon our gratitude," said Mr. Maitland.

"But *I* know," answered Philippa, her colour heightening as she spoke. "She sought us out in our trouble, as she never would have done in our prosperity. She has fed me when I was hungry, and comforted me with her large-hearted, womanly sympathy, when I was ready to despair and die."

Her voice and manner, the expression of her face, the troubled look in her dark grey eyes, all contrasted so strangely with her usual tender, quiet self, that her father was amazed, and stared at her with sudden wonder. He seemed to feel somehow that her words were a reproach to him, and hurried to put himself 'on the defensive, and said, in an aggrieved tone—

“I'm sorry you've been driven to Martha's society for sympathy and comfort, Philippa; but it is no fault of *mine*. You never complained to *me*. How could I tell you were unhappy? Indeed, you took things so coolly, and always seemed so cheerful, I never thought you felt at all. You must own we should never have come to this pass if I had had my will; but when a man is fool enough to take a woman into his confidence, he never knows where she may lead him.”

"I don't think you have any cause to regret having taken me into your confidence," said Philippa, trying to keep her voice steady and her spirit calm.

"But I think I have, and great cause, too," he answered. "If it had not been for your advice, I should have contrived to remain in the old house, and at least have kept up appearances."

"False appearances," rejoined Philippa, "such as only rogues and vagabonds wear to hide their dishonourable lives. God forbid we should ever be reduced to that! Let us live so long as we can, and be honest, papa, and then die. I know we are in a sad plight, but we struggle on in the right way; no matter how much we suffer, how bitterly we feel. One step awry, one thing ill done, and we mortgage our lives to shame. We can never redeem it, never, through all the days to come, however bright those days may be."

“It is only for your sake, Philippa, my child—only for your sake,” said the old man, believing that he spoke the truth; “and in spite of all your fine talking, I think it is always a bad thing to give up appearances. So long as you seem well to do, all the world will trust you. You may live upon unlimited credit——”

“And die in unlimited disgrace,” said Philippa. “Don’t talk so; you speak without thinking. I know you don’t mean what you say; but you give me more pain than all the troubles I—we are obliged to bear.”

“Well, well, I’m sure I don’t want to vex you, child,” he answered; “but you must not talk to me of disagreeable things. I am getting old, and I can’t bear it.” He went into his room, and remained there for the rest of the day, torturing the strings of his instrument, and making it utter the most lamentable sounds, wailing and crying

out like a soul in pain; then there succeeded in quick succession a storm of crashing cries; these subsided at last into a flow of weird, wild music, rich and full; it seemed as though the strings would burst asunder by the weight of their own strange melody. Philippa knew his mood well, and let him remain undisturbed.

That night, ay, and for many other nights, when the dusk of the evening closed in, and the lamps in the street were lighted, Philippa left the house stealthily, so that no one might know of her coming or going, or on what errand she was bent, though, in truth, it was a very sorry one. Closely veiled and shawled she hurried along, up Portland Place and through the loneliest byways to Hanway Street. With a nervous trepidation in her manner and half-hesitating footsteps she came near the print-seller's shop, and—passed it with her head

turned another way. She walked to the other end of the street without looking for what she came to see. Were her drawings sold or not? While she was in doubt, she might still encourage a hope—a feeble, flickering hope indeed—but yet it was a hope, and she could not bear to extinguish it quite. A single glance into the blazing window would resolve her longing expectation to a dead certainty. She longed for the knowledge, and yet she feared to grasp it. She continued walking for nearly half an hour up and down the street, passing and repassing the shop many times, and never once having courage to look into it; but every time she approached it the foolish girl turned her eyes another way, mentally resolving that “the next time she would take courage.” At last she marched boldly past the shop and looked in at the window, as though she were an ordinary passer-by



and had no stake in the things she looked at. Her heart sank, her spirit sickened, and with a heavy involuntary sigh, or rather sob, she shivered from head to foot. There were the meek-eyed oxen standing among the clover, close by the clear, calm pool, waiting patiently; while the pale, feverish girl who made them so like life, was waiting patiently too—waiting almost for bread.

One evening, as she was leaving the house—hoping once more, once more to be disappointed—Mr. Maitland chanced to see her, and inquired where she was going?

“Only on an errand, papa dear—not very far,” she answered.

“But where? where?” he inquired, testily; “it is getting dark, and it is not a proper hour for you to perambulate the streets. I wonder you like it. Cannot you do your errands in the day-time—or let Martha——”

“No,” answered Philippa; “I must do my little bit of business myself. The fact is, papa,” she added, seeing it was better to tell him the plain truth, “I have been painting some little sketches, and I want to go round and see if they are sold. I choose the dusk for my expedition as I don’t want to be seen haunting the place like an impatient ghost.”

Mr. Maitland struck his forehead and groaned aloud; muttering imprecations against the fate that had reduced his child to this. How would it end, and when would the end come of all this struggling?

“If I had only a little money, Philippa,” he said, and the feeble cunning look stole into his eyes—“a very *little*—I could soon end it pleasantly. We—we’re sinking just for the want of a few pounds to keep us afloat. Have you got *no* money, Philippa?”

"None, papa," she answered, and a cold, despairing look crept into her eyes.

"You're quite sure, child—not even a few shillings?"

She shook her head, and said in a low voice—

"The last loaf we have eaten is not paid for yet; and God knows where we shall get another." The words came from her almost unawares; she did not mean to say as much as that—to admit to him to what extremity they were reduced. She smiled in his face the next moment, adding, "But never mind, papa; keep a good heart—don't hinder me now, and perhaps I shall come back rich and——"

"You'll bring the money to me, Philippa, all you get—promise that," he said as he took her hand, and peered into her face with a look which had often startled and distressed her of late. "If I had only a

few pounds now," he added, "I could make hundreds, Philippa; money makes money."

"Don't say so—don't hope so, papa dear," she answered; "it is such unfulfilled hopes as these that have ruined us. Don't hinder me; rest quiet here till I come back—I feel I am going to meet good fortune. Now kiss me and let me go."

She hurried out of his presence, away into the streets, and left him rather bewildered by her sudden departure. He was slow to think, slow to act, and it was not till she had been gone about ten minutes that it struck him he might and ought to have accompanied her; but it was too late to think of that—he did not know which way she had gone, so he could not follow her. He would try and wait her returning patiently. But he could not be patient: he walked about the room in a state of fidgety unrest, then he went to the window and

stared up at the darkening skies, straining his eyes as though he were searching for some distant star; then he clenched his hands and gnashed his teeth in impotent rage. He had grown weary of struggling in the network of adverse circumstances which his own hand had woven round them, he must, he would break it in some way; and then—what then? But his thoughts were stopped there; they were too vague and feeble to go beyond the present hour. He took up the bow of his violin and drew it once or twice across the strings, but he was too excited and agitated to play; the music hid itself away somewhere, it would not answer to his touch. He laid the instrument aside, and walked from one room into the other; opening boxes and drawers, peeping into cupboards and odd nooks and corners. Then, with a sort of magpiecuriosity, he inspected Philippa's work-basket, turn-

ing over its contents in an aimless, objectless sort of way. At last, by the merest chance, he came upon the little store of money she had laid by to pay the next quarter's rent, which would be due in a few weeks. It was not much, only a few pounds, but it seemed like a little fortune to him now that the sight of gold was an unfamiliar thing to him. Of late he had rarely been the possessor of more than a half-crown; sometimes, indeed, he had gone about for days with empty pockets. His eyes brightened, and at first he chuckled with delight as he turned the sovereigns from one hand into the other; then his brow puckered into an angry frown as he remembered Philippa had told him she had not even a "few shillings."

"Philippa lies!" he muttered, with strong emphasis on the words. "Philippa tells lies!" he added, thrusting the gold hur-

riedly into his pocket as though he were afraid she might come home before he could get clear off with his booty. He put on his hat, took his stick, and descended the stairs quickly, glancing nervously round him as he turned off the doorstep. He had not been gone long when Philippa returned, with a white, chilled look upon her face, which told a story of disappointment and weary-heartedness more pathetically than words could have done. The bloom of her beauty was fading away; it was no longer full of the rich freshness of life. Her marble-hued face would have been a sad study for thoughtful eyes. She knew she was altered; she looked in her glass, and could trace the change day by day; but her lost beauty never cost her a sigh. *He*, for whom she would have guarded it, and in whose eyes she would have loved to have seemed fair, was not there to look upon her; he was

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far away, and seemed to have forgotten her existence, for he gave no sign of remembering it. If there had only been herself to care for during these troublous days, she would have had neither strength nor courage to live through them. The nervous energy of life, which was already flickering and low, would have died outright, but the necessity to live for another supported her, as it has supported many others, through troubles more bitter than death's bitter self could bring. She must live for her father's sake. The thought of him gave new vigour to her spirit now as she toiled wearily up the stairs. In the midst of her own desolation she was concocting a flattering tale for his ears. If she could only feed him on hope, she would be content to starve for the want of it. She called a smile to her lips as she entered the room and looked round, expecting to find her father there;



but lo! the bird had flown. She looked into his room—he was not there. He had left the house, and she had been gone scarce half an hour. The first thing that met her eyes as she re-entered the sitting-room was the little rent-purse emptied of its contents! She took it up and turned it inside out, being slow to believe the evidence of her own senses. But the truth came to her; she saw how it was; she knew why and for what purpose he had taken the money. Speculation was raising its snake-like head again, inciting him to—what? *Steal* was the word which sprang promptly from her heart to her lips; for it was stealing—it was robbing Martha, their just creditor, of her just due; for how could the rent be paid now that the money she had hoarded so carefully was gone? Philippa felt cold and stunned, and sat staring into the fire with a stony look in her eyes, that had

never settled there before as it settled now. If he had done this thing, stripped his own home in this silent underhanded way of the means of living, what might he not do next when these resources failed? She knew his brain was weakened, his sense of right and wrong strangely confused : he might wander abroad, and be tempted into some wrongdoing, which the world would not excuse and the law would punish. Her blood froze with the terror of her thoughts, her dread of what might be. For a long time she sat thus, powerless to grapple with the dread that oppressed her ; she was utterly beaten down. At last a sigh, or rather sob, which seemed to rend her very heartstrings, burst from her lips ; she wrung her hands, exclaimed with hysterical fervour, " Oh, God ! Father in heaven ! spare us from this ; let us work, beg, starve, die, but save us from public shame ! save *him* from the world's

scorn!" She buried her face in her hands, and the tears rained down her cheeks; she sobbed as though her heart would break. There was a step upon the stair, but she heard it not; the door was opened by some impatient hand, and the tall, stalwart figure of a man stepped into the room, and looked eagerly round. He heard the low sobbing sound of a woman's voice—that one woman's voice which he would have recognised among a thousand, though he had never heard it utter such distressful moans—but he could not see her; for one second the dusky twilight baffled his sight, the next his eyes fell on the girl's bent figure, as she had thrown herself into the chair and was sobbing now despairingly. With a hurried exclamation he strode forward, laid his hand upon her shoulder, saying, in sympathetic alarm—

“Miss Maitland! Philippa! for heaven's sake don't sob in this distracted way.”

At the sound of his voice the sighs were arrested on her lips. She looked up in breathless wonder; at the same moment the firelight flickered and lighted up his face, that was like the face of a god to her, full of glory and grace, coming as it came now in the darkest hour of the day, the darkest hour of her life. A revulsion of feeling swept through her whole nature, shaking it to its inmost depths; so sudden, swift, and strong it was it swept away all signs of sorrow and despair, all memories of everything. She only knew that *he* was there, *he* for whom she had shed so many silent bitter tears during the long monotonous struggle of the last few months; but though her mind was full of him his name had never passed her lips. She had lived through the quiet days toiling for bread, now hoping, now despairing, in a dull, soulless way, giving to the eyes of the world

without no sign of what was going on in the world within herself. His sudden appearance was almost too much for her: she laughed and cried hysterically, her eyes glistened, and every feature in her face was lighted up with a strange joy. She was like one transfigured body and soul. Reserve, pride, prudence, all the mental barriers she had erected between herself and her *love*, between herself and him, all broke down; the quiet, cold, stately Philippa vanished, and a passionate girl flung her arms round his neck, and among the wild words that bubbled up from her lips amid hysterical tears and laughter, she called his name.

“Oh, Jasper! Jasper! I thought you had forsaken us.” The tone of her voice, the manner of her utterance, as well as the glow upon her face told him what his heart had ached to know—that she loved him, and he knew now that he loved her, and he

also knew the reason why her face had haunted him so long and so sorely against his will. They had both been walking in the darkness, and now both came simultaneously upon the light. At that moment he cast away all thought of name, fame, fortune, friends, he forgot that she was a ruined speculator's daughter—he remembered only that she was a beautiful woman and he loved her. He folded her in his arms, his fair crisp curls mingled with her blue-black braid, and a shower of kisses fell where the tears had rained before.





## CHAPTER XI.

### ENTHUSIASTIC EMPRESSEMENT.

**T**HERE is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune." Though indeed the great bard might have added—the fortune it bears upon its bosom is not always a freight of happiness. The one supreme turn in the tide of Philippa Maitland's life had come, but whether it would flow on and lift her on the waves of a glorious and happy life or leave her stranded on its shores, time alone could tell; at present she had no thought but for the hour, her whole being was possessed by the one thought—"he loves me." She could have repeated the words over

and over again. Like some subtle essence they crept into every nook and cranny of her brain, every pulse of her heart; they danced before her eyes, she saw them written on the air if she looked up into the skies, or looking down upon the earth she saw them written there also. She felt as though she never could be cold or hungry or sad or sorrowful any more. His love to her dazed spirit seemed all-sufficient for all time.

It was late that night when Mr. Maitland returned home, feeble and crestfallen. The excitement was over, and he knew what he had done. If he had been fortunate and returned home with double the amount of money he had taken away, it would have been a different matter. "The end justifies the means," he would have pleaded; but now things had gone wrong with him. He had risked all and lost. The



money he had found so hard to get was gone, and he had reaped no benefit from it. He was afraid and ashamed to meet his daughter's eye. He wondered if she had discovered what he had done, and what she would say, what she would think of him? The hope he had felt on going out was not half so vivid as his despair in coming home. He ascended the stairs with a slow, desponding step; but great was his surprise when on entering the room Philippa threw herself into his arms, and lifting her radiant face to his exclaimed—

“Jasper has come back, papa! I have seen him, and—and he has never forgotten me.” She hid her glowing face upon his shoulder as she spoke, and the old man knew how things had fallen out. He saw enough in her eyes to make his heart glad. “So Jasper Brantynham loved his child? But there was no wonder in that—she was

beautiful enough to absorb the admiration of a king." A few tender words he said to her, but he asked her no questions that night. He was glad to see her [with a bright, happy face, and to feel that her thoughts were for a season diverted from their domestic troubles. He rejoiced for her sake, somewhat; but above all he rejoiced for himself, for though his doings might not have escaped her knowledge, *he* had escaped her censure. She was too much occupied by her own feelings to be affected by anything that was unconnected with the present hour. Again he looked forward to a brighter future for himself, for he hoped that Jasper Brantynham's generosity would make his journey through the coming years easy to him.

From that time Jasper Brantynham was a constant visitor in Great Marylebone Street, though no formal proposal was

made on the one side and accepted on the other—according to the orthodox code which the world has drawn out, and which it expects society rigidly to observe in all matters connected with love and marriage ; but they felt that their case was an isolated one—they did not belong to the world, and were freed from the trammels of the other. The present sufficed for them ; they never thought of the future ; they felt that all the years to come could never bring them anything half so sweet as the moments that were now stealing away.

During the day Philippa worked hard, being inspirited and hopeful, for her sketches sold with marvellous rapidity, and fetched almost fancy prices. She cherished the belief that some generous connoisseur had recognised and was paying homage to her talent. Sometimes she counted over her earnings proudly, and showed them to

Jasper, little thinking that the glittering coin had passed from his purse to hers. He was the purchaser of her handiwork, and paid for them with no niggard hand; but for the world he would not have had her known that. He only laughed when she showed him her gains, and said she had sold her sketches for half their value. He often sat by her side the greater part of the day while she was painting, criticising her labours in the most absurd fashion, making his ridiculous remarks with pursed-up lips and grave pompous tones, and an affectation of critical powers that might have been envied by the renowned Mr. Puff himself, though his eyes were brimming over with fun the while. There was less work than laughter during these pleasant morning meetings. Sometimes she would ask him to read to her, as she busily plied her brush, and he generally selected scenes from the

old dramatists, full of the passion and fire of the old days, before the drama had been filtered down to the realistic school, or brightened into the glittering sensational style which delights the audiences of the present day and would have disgusted those of bygone times. Philippa fancied that the ideas flowed more freely through her brain—that the brush moved more freely over the canvas—that the picture itself came out with more graceful forms and harmonious colouring while she listened to the music of his voice and the poetry of his chosen author; just as we have heard some hard-worked toilers in the dull ploughed field of literary labour assert that they “got on” better while the sound of music was rippling in their ears, as it “helped them on.” But before Jasper had got through many pages, it often happened that they stopped to discuss the characters, the writing, and the author. The book was laid aside, the brush dropped

from the slender fingers, and the conversation drifted away to their own thoughts and feelings, their own loves and lives. Without any disrespect to the author it must be admitted that they found the unwritten prose poetry of their own lives far more interesting than the rhymes of the dead poet. If an artist could have looked in upon them at such moments he would have been seized with a desire to paint them on the spot. There would have been no necessity for him to idealize beauty if he could have transferred those two living models to his canvas. He would have had a fair chance of making his fame, if not his fortune. Jasper, with his fine athletic figure, noble face, and fair curls brushed negligently off his forehead, was a good specimen of the genus "man."

"The massive square of his heroic breast,  
And arms whereon the standing muscle sloped,"

would have illustrated him fairly. He

dressed himself with due regard to fashion, and, though he might be careless and negligent, he was never slovenly; easy himself on all occasions, and with all people, he put everyone else at ease. There was a nonchalant grace in his movements, an originality in his ideas, and a quaintness in his expressions that lifted him far above the common society man. Such a stereotyped individual would never have made an impression on Philippa's high-souled nature. They were indeed a well-matched pair; he in his manly strength, she in her grand statuesque beauty, in the glory of youth and the glory of love—

“Tall as a Tula and pure as a nun.”

In the calm depths of her serene grey eyes, you caught a glimpse of a soul of fire burning with a steady, passionate devotion to this man—this god, who had said he loved her.

Their inner lives seemed cut clean out, as a thing quite apart from the every-day world around them. It seemed a pity they could not live without eating, drinking, and sleeping, as other people did; but even love could not exempt them from the common tax upon humanity, and their outer lives flowed on with the common current, seeming in no wise different from the lives around them, but taking the rich glow and colouring from below. They were wandering through the "fool's paradise," which the wisest men have travelled before them, and handed down to posterity their bitter experience of the fruit thereof, but without avail. Meanwhile Philippa worked hard; the money flowed into her empty purse; the baker was paid; and Mrs. Titkins duly received her quarter's rent. Fortune smiled on the household. Jasper had never been so happy. He enjoyed all the privileges of



an engaged man, and paid none of the penalties. He was not trotted out at evening parties, or forced to undergo the excruciating ordeal of an introduction to a host of critical relatives, or run the gauntlet of pleasant chaff and quizzing through a regiment of friends and acquaintances, male and female, who consider themselves entitled to be facetiously unpleasant on such occasions. Their love was trammelled by none of these things; even the much-maligned, long-suffering victim, the chaperone, was dispensed with in their case. They indulged in long pleasant rambles beneath the grand old beech and chestnut trees in Kensington Gardens, wandering whole hours in their umbrageous shade, or resting on some rustic bench under their luxuriant branches. In no city of the world do we find a more delightful promenade than may be enjoyed either in

Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens, though the great heart of London is beating and pulsating on all sides. There we may indulge in the most complete seclusion, or plunge into the vortex of the busy world, and become a part of its rushing, roaring life; but Philippa and Jasper kept far away from all the noise and dazzling confusion of London society, and loitered through the brief spring evenings beneath the wide-spreading branches of tender green—for it was May, the spring-time of the year, and the spring-time of her life as well. The soft love-light shone in her eyes, and she looked supremely happy and supremely content, as though there had been no miserable past, and could be no miserable future—nothing to fear, nothing to regret, only the present to be enjoyed. Will she be as happy when the leaves have fallen, and the faded, dead things are rustling on the

ground—while the old hopes and dead loves of the past season are buried out of sight? But—

“ We are not sure of sorrow,  
And joy was never sure.”

Not even the most cultivated scientific mind nor subtlest intellect can lift aside the veil which covers the face of the future, neither can they see the outline, nor guess the form of a single feature; so completely is it veiled from all human sight.

While Philippa was wandering on the threshold of her paradise, Mr. Maitland was enjoying the delights of a different kind of Eden. He had made very free with Jasper's purse and with Jasper's name, and spent the greater part of his days as well as his nights between his darling violin (which, through all his excitement or trouble he never neglected) and the old game of speculation—the latter being played on a very small scale, it is true.

One morning, as Jasper Brantynham was preparing to pay his usual visit to Great Marylebone Street, Mr. Gwynn made his appearance, and without stopping to exchange even the commonest commonplace greeting, exclaimed suddenly—

“Where’s your friend Maitland? Can I get at him easily, at once, or it will be too late?”

“I was just starting to pay him a visit,” said Jasper.

“I will go with you,” rejoined Mr. Gwynn.

As soon as they got into the street they hailed a hansom, and as they rattled along, Jasper learned the reason of his friend’s unexpected visit. It appeared there was to be a grand operatic concert at the Floral Hall that morning, commencing at the usual hour, three o’clock; it was now two, and one of the orchestra, a third violin, had been

suddenly taken ill, and Mr. Gwynn be-  
thought him of Mr. Maitland, with whose  
genius he had been very much struck,  
although as yet he had never been able to  
do anything for his advancement. Now an  
opportunity had occurred whereby he could  
accommodate himself, oblige his friend, and  
show his just appreciation of the old man's  
talent. Fortunately, Mr. Maitland had not  
started on his daily round; he received Mr.  
Gwynn's proposal with unexampled delight,  
and in less than five minutes he and his two  
visitors were en route for the Floral Hall,  
where they duly arrived.

Mr. Maitland received his score and his  
instructions, and was shown his place in the  
orchestra among the rest of the performers.  
He could hardly believe in his own identity,  
that *he*, his veritable self, was seated there  
with his darling child in his arms. It was  
going to speak; hitherto its sweet voice had

been reserved for his ear only, now it was going to speak—to mingle with other voices, strange and loud; but they would never be able to overpower it, he thought. As the note of the clarion is heard above the roar of battle, the thunder of drums, so would his wondrous-voiced violin make itself heard mingling with, and yet above, all other harmonious sounds. He lifted it to his shoulder, laid his head upon it lovingly as he tuned its strings, his very touch seemed caressing, as though he would coax it to do its bravest and best for its master's sake. Presently the conductor appeared in his place. There was a momentary silence; he glanced round upon the group of well-trained musicians who surrounded him awaiting his signal. He lifted his baton slowly, cast a rapid look round on every watchful face. The baton descended, and the soul of music burst from a hundred strings.

Mr. Maitland acquitted himself so well during his temporary engagement at the Floral Hall, that when the regular opera season commenced, Mr. Gwynn managed that he should be engaged as one of the second violins. At one time, Mr. Maitland would have considered it a sad coming-down for him to stand and play for bread in a place of public amusement. But time and trouble had changed him, as it changes most people, and he received the offer of a permanent engagement with great joy. Like all sanguine natures, he had been sorely cast down when his genius failed to be immediately recognised and rendered available by Mr. Gwynn on their first interview, but better late than never. He was delighted at the changed aspect of affairs, and entered zealously into the business of the hour. His violin was rarely out of his hand. He was coaxing it, tuning

and practising it half the day; he devoted himself so entirely to his new and pleasant duties that he had neither time nor inclination to think of anything else, and, for the time being, he was utterly drawn away from the fatal fascination that had been his ruin. For the present all was well; how long this satisfactory state of affairs would last, it was out of the power of mortals to tell.

Every night during his brief engagement at the Floral Hall, Philippa and Jasper Brantynham were among the audience; she, with earnest, loving eyes, watching the dear grey head with all-absorbing affection. Jasper was happy because of her happiness, and glad to look upon the beautiful face, to watch its sweet, ever-changing expression with an artist's admiration, a poet's love. He loved her with all the depth and fervour of his strong manly nature; but, it must be



owned there was some alloy mingled with his golden affections. He was no longer a boy, who with a boy's headstrong sanguine nature, can take for his motto and illustrate by his actions the words "All for love, or the world well lost." He set great store upon the world, and would not have considered it "well lost" at any price. He regretted no word he had spoken—nothing he had done; and so far as Philippa was concerned, if he had had to choose over again, and the whole length and breadth of the land was before him, he would still have chosen *her*; but he would gladly have dispensed with one appendage to which she was fondly attached—viz., her father. All the glamour of love could not hide from Jasper Brantynham's eyes the fact that Mr. Maitland was a serious inconvenience, to use the mildest term. He shrank from presenting to the world (especially the world

of Brantynham) the ruined speculator as his father-in-law! . A feeling of secret, silent shame crept into his heart, as he looked from Philippa's fair face to her father's grey head in the orchestra below; somehow, it did not seem natural that the father of the future Mrs. Brantynham should be playing in a place of public amusement for his daily bread. But what was to be done? At present nothing. He could not make an offer of his purse to support their scanty household, because he knew it would not be accepted. Philippa, from a natural feeling of delicacy, kept their private affairs as much as possible from Jasper's knowledge; she shrank from the idea of being under any pecuniary obligation to him. Even though starvation had stared them in the face, she would have hidden the gaunt spectre behind her, and smiled in his eyes; but no such evil thing threatened them now; at present all was

well with them. Her earnings and her father's together were more than sufficient for their present need, and the frugal little housewife laid by a trifle for a rainy day.

There had been times when she had felt that her father was wanting in energy and perseverance. He would never *seek* for employment, but now that an opportunity had come to him he had seized it and worked cheerfully, utilizing his talents in the best way he could. Philippa being very proud of her father saw no shame where no wrong thing existed. No matter what the past had been, he was engaged now in following an honourable profession; he had begun at the bottom of the ladder, it was true, but aided by his genius he might climb to the topmost round. Many world-famous men before him had begun as humbly and reached as high. In the pride and simplicity of her heart Philippa talked

to Jasper on the subject, expatiating on her dear father's talent and what she considered his good fortune. The subject was always distasteful to Jasper. Once he was tempted to exclaim—

“ My darling Philippa, you talk as though the crowning glory and honour of a man's life was to play the fiddle at Her Majesty's Opera! Of course it is all right enough if a fellow's reduced to it, but I don't think the mere fact is a thing to boast of.”

Philippa shrank within herself, pained at the light, irreverent way of alluding to that which to her was so all-important. Jasper's feeling upon the subject was not a noble one; but perhaps if we were to poll the world we should find that ninety-nine men out of a hundred, if placed exactly in the same position, would have felt as he did. Human nature is never wholly perfect: there are

small faults and petty weaknesses even in the finest characters, though it is only under certain circumstances that they become visible to the outer world. The great fault in Jasper Brantynham's character was an over-sensitive pride, which under some conditions degenerated to moral weakness. In his secret heart he *now* respected Mr. Maitland more than he had ever done in his more prosperous days, and if he had been somebody else and not Philippa's father he might have been proud of his acquaintance.

Mr. Maitland, as we have said, was fortunate enough to be engaged in the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre. Preparations were made for the coming season. The musical world was getting excited (at least as excited as the well-bred portion of the British public permits itself to be), and stood on the tiptoe of expectation,

looking forward to the advent of a new singer, whose reputation had travelled here before her. Her coming was heralded by premature puffs and eulogistic praises, calculated to pique curiosity and create an interest in the singer before she presented herself to the eyes and ears of the British public. Rumour had unloosed her hundred tongues, and sent her reputation hither on the wings of the wind; every one was expecting great things, though very few could tell from what special source this expectation arose. Those who had heard her in Vienna wrote home to their friends in England the most enthusiastic praises of this marvellous singer, who would soon be among them. By degrees her coming was canvassed over at the clubs, discussed at dinner-parties, and formed a slight staple of conversation between young people at evening parties. The strictly musical

portion of the world, to whom the appearance of a new singer was a matter of deep interest, watched and waited quietly.

In due time the singer arrived in England, and her "first appearance" was duly announced in all the London papers. The evening came at last when she was to prove her right to be "prima donna" of the season, or renounce the hope of it. The opera was *Hamlet*; the rôle Mademoiselle C. N. was to fill being that of Ophelia. Madame Titiens played the Queen, and a more royal, queenlike Queen never trod the mimic stage.

The house was full to overflowing, and a general buzz of expectation rose on all sides; but among that august assemblage, which composed the beauty, the aristocracy, and wealth of England, there was not one who looked forward with more pleasurable excitement or with keener powers of ap-

preciation than the humble employé in the orchestra, Mr. Maitland, who, violin in hand, took his place among his brother musicians.

It seemed so strange, almost like a waking dream to him, when he found himself then occupying the position he did in the house he knew so well. One of the most pleasant extravagances of his life had been stalls at the Opera, which he retained from season to season; there, for many years past, he had taken his seat among the most critical audience in the world, and used his just privilege to criticise and admire, to praise or blame. How different it all seemed now!

He saw things with his mental vision as well as with his actual eyes, and felt dazzled and perplexed in the extreme. He looked upon the brilliant scene from quite a different point of view, and it was strange and



novel to him. He remembered the faces of many men and women, too, who, like himself, had been habitués of the Opera for many years. Was there any corresponding chord of memory touched in their hearts, I wonder, as their eyes rested on the weird, grey-headed old man, who sat there, instrument in hand, ready to play his part in the evening's programme, as a worker now, no longer one of the audience? Perhaps some careless eye scanning the mass of orchestral professionals might have dwelt for a moment on the one face which brought back to them a reminiscence of some one or something past — a momentary memory, nothing more. Things and people are soon forgotten. Once, as the ruined speculator looked round somewhat vacantly, his eyes rested on the very seat he had occupied for so many seasons, and where for the last few years his daughter's beautiful, earnest

face had been beside him, and won its full share of admiration for the passing hour.

Now the old place was filled with new faces; his head swam, he turned giddy, he felt a choking sensation in his throat, the house seemed changing to a vast kaleidoscope of variegated colours and faces; but the orchestra struck up and recalled him to himself, and he went through his duties bravely, playing his best, and making his beloved violin speak in its sweetest and purest tones. The curtain rose, and his ears drank in the delicious voice of the singer, who roused the coldest and most critical audience in the world to such a state of enthusiasm as had not been created by any songstress since the days of Jenny Lind's first appearance. The enthusiasm, however, did not reach its height till the mad scene, when the sweet Ophelia floats

away in a flood of music among the reedy rushes, out of sight of the audience, as she is supposed to float out of sight of the world. Then the excitement of the audience burst all bounds, and their applause was loud and long—it was tremendous.

Mr. Maitland forgetting that he had no longer a right either to applaud or to condemn—forgetting indeed everything except the entrancing power of the singer—joined in the applause with all his might; he waved his violin above his head, and in his excitement flung his bow as though it had been a bouquet of flowers at the feet of the singer. His ears, his brain, his very soul seemed full of the music she had made. What followed his extraordinary proceeding, or how he was hurried out of the orchestra, he never thoroughly remembered. Everything was in a state of chaotic confusion. He knew nothing till

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